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FICTION

CRESSY AND POICTIERS
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
• ERNEST RHYS •

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ROMANCE



IN TWO STYLES OF BINDING, CLOTH
FLAT BACK COLOURED TOP AND
LEATHER ROUND CORNERS GILT TOP.

LONDON: J. M. DENT & CO.





A TALE
WHICH
HOLDETH
CHILDREN
FROM PLAY
& OLD MEN
FROM THE
CHIMNEY
CORNER
SIR PHILIP SIDNEY



CRESSY &
POICTIERS
The STORY *of* the
BLACK PRINCE'S
PAGE (M) (M) BY
J·G·EDGAR (M)



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INTRODUCTION

"IVANHOE," picturing the days of Richard Cœur de Lion, leapt over all but a couple of centuries to draw upon Froissart. The present romance of Edward the Black Prince's time is well within the barriers of the best of all the romantic chroniclers, and perhaps its chief merit is that it is both historically and romantically an avowed Froissart book. Its author, J. G. Edgar, who was of course not a Walter Scott, wrote and was content to write for "Beeton's Boys' Own Magazine" in its palmy days, between forty and fifty years ago, when its editor had a very distinct idea of bringing English history into holiday range. Edgar was one of his chief contributors, and wrote some capital stories and histories, of which three or four are still in favour, and this story of "Cressy and Poitiers" is the best of them.

Edgar, being a minor and not a major romancer, gave less rein to his fantasy than Scott, and kept closer to his originals. He conceived in this story the happy idea of accommodating the Black Prince with an adventurous and vain-glorious page, whom he calls Arthur Winram, who is, as a necessity of fiction, bound to be of nobler birth than that name would seem to say, and to be subject to the wicked designs of those who would keep him from his birthright. Through the eyes of this page are viewed the martial events and pageantry in the career of the Black Prince, leading up to the fields of Créçy and Poitiers, and so to the Prince's death. Thus there are three chief fortunes at stake: that of the page and hero, that of the Black Prince, and that of England herself.

If you turn from the romance to the actual story of the Black Prince, as it is told by the historians, you will find the details in which Edgar differs from them are either those that are necessarily fictitious, or those that are not very essential. And if you compare his book with Froissart, you will find that once he has got on common ground with the fourteenth-

century chronicler, he keeps pretty well on terms with him in the succession of events.

Edgar takes 1328 as the year of his page and hero's birth; and that was a year to "precipitate affairs," as the chroniclers of a later date than Froissart's used to say. In that year Charles of France died, and Philip of Valois was elected by the peers and barons of France to the realm, and so put out the Queen of England, Isabel, daughter of Philip le Beau, who was the next heir.

"Thus," says Froissart, "passed this realm of France out of her right lineage, as it hath been deemed by many." And thus came many wars and dire calamities. And "this is the very foundation of this history, to recount the great enterprises and feats of arms that have fallen: for since the time of Charlemagne there never befell so great adventures."

In the same year—that is, 1328—King Edward married Philippa of Hainault. "The English chronicle saith this marriage and coronation of the queen was done at York with much honour." In the year following, their first-born child, Edward, afterwards called the Black Prince, blessed this union.

This gives us the year of 1344 (when the Black Prince was fifteen, and his future page a year older) as the natural one for this boyish tale of adventure to open. It was the year when Philip of Valois murdered twelve Breton hostages, and Edward vowed revenge; and this was the time, too, of the revolt in Flanders. In 1345, Jacob von Arteveldt was the victim of the mob. "Poor men first set him high, and evil men slew him," says Froissart. One may compare the romance with the chronicle here to the advantage of the latter. In the eleventh chapter of the story we are at Caen; and Froissart's chronicles give us one or two inimitable story-teller's cues of which hardly sufficient account is made. That little tower at the foot of the bridge, seen at the end of the street, and the one-eyed knight Sir Thomas, who saved the lives of many dames and damosels and cloisterers, as he rode through the town, make one of those medieval pictures, lifelike and minute, which are like little windows into actual history.

Many such episodes fill in the story before we come to the

big battle-piece of Créçy. In the preamble, good use is made of the guide, Gobin Agace, who guides the English in the passage of the Somme, at the passage called Blanche Paque. There is no better account anywhere in history and romance than that Froissart gives of Cressy at its most striking moments. It may seem here and there that something of the confusion of the field itself obscures his story; but his strokes are sure and tell-tale as can be desired when the climax comes; and wonderfully he uses the natural effects—the storm, the great rain, the thunder and lightning; and then the ominous flight of crows over both battles; and the sudden bright emergence of the sun, to dazzle the Frenchmen's eyes, and warm the stout backs of the English; and finally the arrow-shot of the English archers, so thick and so concerted, that "it seemed to be snow!" The disastrous failure of the Genoese crossbows in reply we find both in Froissart and in Edgar's pages; and the detail of the King's post, "on a little windmill hill," where he hears that his son, the Prince, is hard pressed, and says: "Let them suffer him this day to win his spurs!" is another famous incident on which the chronicler and the novelist draw alike.

One or two circumstances of the battle are slightly changed in Edgar's page. The strength of the English position on the high ground, upon the right bank of the river, is hardly made so clear as might be. The English are seated on a large plain when first seen by Philip, in the romance. Edgar would have gained by comparing Froissart with other records in picturing this scene. Again, he does not speak of the small cannon that were used at Créçy, though at the siege of Calais they are remembered in his account. Froissart says expressly, however, that small cannon were posted between the archers; and Edward certainly took cannon with him from England. The cannon used in the siege of Calais threw balls of three or four ounces weight.

The Black Prince's page is made a prisoner after Créçy; and the succeeding chain of events is again not quite given its proportionate effect in the romance. However, we have some compensation—the battle of Neville's Cross, which Froissart, by the way, reports to have taken place only three miles from Newcastle-on-Tyne and calls after that famous old

town accordingly. Then succeeds the siege of Calais, and its surrender on the 3rd August, 1347. One passage here from Froissart that is not in Edgar is too good for either romance or history to forget. It is where the French herald Sir John returns into the beleaguered town with the message of the English King :

“Then Sir John went unto the market place, and sounded the common bell: then, all incontinent, men and women assembled there, and the captain made report of all he had done, and said, ‘Sirs, it will be none otherwise, therefore now take advice, and make a short answer.’ Then all the people began to weep and make such sorrow, that there was not so hard a heart, if they had seen them, but that would have had great pity of them ; the captain himself wept piteously.”

At this surrender of Calais, the question whether the six townsmen came forth with halters round their necks or with ropes in their hands need not disturb the reader. Tradition favours the former, and plain history the latter.

It is at the battle of Poitiers that the real value of Edgar’s story as a tributary current leading into the broad stream of history is best to be discovered. One more illustration from Froissart may be given here, because it has to do with an incident which gave Edgar one of his clues. It is that of the scene where the Squire of Picardy, Johan de Helenes, takes the Lord Berkeley, who had been pursuing him.

“And when he had pursued him the space of a league, the said John turned again, and laid his sword in rest instead of a spear, and so came running toward the Lord Berkeley, who lift up his sword to have stricken the Squire. But when he saw the stroke come, he turned from it, so that the Englishman lost his stroke ; and John struck him as he passed on the arm, that the Lord Berkeley’s sword fell into the field.”

This is enough to show how close the martial passes and exchanges in the story keep to the picture seen by Froissart.

One of the drawbacks of the story as a piece of history, as something more than a picture, is that it does not make us realise the daring—the merciless, impressive personal effect of the Prince ; or the tragedy then of the last illness pursuing this man of force all through the final campaign ; for his end in this book is a casual matter, treated in a postscript or

little more than that. But the romance carries us through an extraordinary and overwhelming series of events, and serves to stimulate—although Edgar's manner is staid comparatively with other romancers of history—a new delight in the heroic and chivalric colours of the time.

Sir John Chandos and the Cardinal of Perigord, as they pass through Edgar's story, do not leave you at all satisfied to know them only there. It is of the nature of good romance to suggest and not to complete, offering an oblique reflection of great affairs and huge figures; and if Edgar's mirror in this is a fainter one than Scott's, one is still grateful to him for holding it up to the fourteenth century as he did. Read him with Froissart in reserve, and you have a very good idea of that fighting time which was at once so valiant and so meagre, so adventurous and so mortal for the soldiers and captains, and often so terrible for the poor folk—men, women, and children, who, like those of Caen, were massacred because their masters were pleased to be militant.

One other point remains, which has perplexed the historians and is of extreme interest in romance, and that has to do with the Black Prince's proverbial colour. Was it his armour, or the terror he caused, that made men call him "Black"? Froissart never uses the label at all; but there is evidence of his black armour, and romance dare not now change his coat.

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE PUBLISHED WORKS OF
JOHN GEORGE EDGAR
1834-1864

Biography for Boys, 1853. *The Boyhood of Great Men*, 1853. *History for Boys*, 1855. *Boy Princes*, 1857. *The Heroes of England*, 1858. *The Wars of the Roses*, 1859. *The Crusades and the Crusaders*, 1860. *Cavaliers and Roundheads*, 1861. *Sea Kings and Naval Heroes*, 1861. *Memorable Events of Modern History*, 1862. *Danes, Saxons, and Normans*, 1863. *Cressy and Poitiers* (in *Beeton's Boys' Own Magazine*, 1863), 1865. *Historical Anecdotes of Animals*, 1865. *Runnymede and Lincoln Fair*, 1866.

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CRESSY AND POICTIERS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

IN the fourteenth century, when the population of England was estimated at two millions—when our railways were bridle-roads and our cornfields forests, and when the capital was a little town enclosed by an old Roman fortified wall, with towers and turrets—no festival, save Christmas and May Day, was regarded with more interest than Midsummer Eve, or the vigil of St. John the Baptist.

Great was the commotion, much the ceremony, in London on such occasions; and as the shades of evening fell, young and old, high and low, rich and poor, participated in the excitement of the hour. The houses were decorated with branches of green birch, long fennel, St. John's rush, and orpine; and as night closed over the city the inhabitants illuminated their dwellings with clusters of lamps, and made the streets resound with merriment and song.

At the same time, the ceremony of "setting the watch"—a body of armed guards, instituted in the reign of the third Henry to keep the peace, and prevent robberies and outrages—was performed with much show and splendour. On this ceremony, indeed, large sums of money were expended, and the watchmen, arrayed "in bright harness," marched in procession, accompanied by the Lord Mayor and aldermen, the city officers, a crowd of minstrels, giants, and morris-dancers; while blazing cressets and huge torches, borne on men's shoulders, threw a flood of light over the scene, and raised the wonder of the thronging populace.

Meanwhile, a large fire was kindled in the street, and

stirred to a blaze, which was intended to typify the patron saint of the day. Around this fire lads and lasses danced and disported themselves merrily to the sound of music. Many and gay were the capers they cut as the flames rose and fell. Sometimes they leaped over the fire amid many shouts, and at others they looked through garlands at the flame, believing that, by so doing, they freed themselves from various pains and diseases, present and prospective.

Not till midnight—sometimes not till dawn—did the dancing cease; and as soon as day broke, while the dew was still on the grass and flowers, the young women went forth to practise certain rites, by which they believed they could assure themselves of the constancy or inconstancy of their wooers. Collecting garlands of flowers, the nymphs bound them on their heads, and according as the dew remained a longer or shorter time on the flowers, they augured more or less favourably of the fidelity of their lovers. Moreover, they secured a snow-white wether, decorated it with garlands, and, enclosing it in a hut of heath, danced and sang around. She who wished to test her fortune stood by the door, and if the wether remained quiet she considered the omen good; but if he pushed his horns through the door of the hut, she concluded that her suitor was to prove false.

Such was the great medieval festival that was being celebrated at the time when our chronicle opens, when Edward III. was King of England, and on the point of undertaking the war with France, which resulted in mighty victories won and splendid conquests achieved against great odds; and when the hero of this story entered upon the remarkable adventures which associated his name with that of the young conqueror of Cressy and Poitiers—Edward, Prince of Wales, popularly known as “the Black Prince.”

CHAPTER II

THE FALCON IN GRACECHURCH

It was Midsummer Eve in the year 1344, and the citizens of London were celebrating the festival of St. John the Baptist, when I, then a stripling of fifteen, with a tall figure

and a dreamy eye, like that of one indulging much in internal visions, mounted on a little black horse of great speed and high mettle, trotted by the side of my aged grandsire, a tall and still vigorous man, into the capital of England, and alighted at the hostelry known as the Falcon, situated in Gracechurch, and kept by Thomelin of Winchester.

I had journeyed with my grandsire from his homestead at Greenmead, on the border of Windsor Forest, and my eyes were, for the first time, gladdened with a sight of London. Hitherto I had been reared in obscurity; and, except on the occasion of a rare visit to the little town of Windsor, I had seen nothing of life. I was well aware of the disadvantages of my position; for, though brought up in obscurity, my ambition was ardent; and, while seeing little of life, I was constantly regaling my imagination with stirring scenes, in all of which I enacted a conspicuous part.

My excitement on entering a city I had often longed to behold was naturally high; and, as we rode along, I was much impressed with the novelty of the scene. London and the Londoners were that evening in holiday attire, and everything wore a gay aspect. The houses were lighted up; the streets were crowded with the populace; and an unwonted degree of jollity appeared to brighten every face. Even the beggar and the outcast began to think their condition tolerable, as they watched the kindling of the great fire which was to typify the saint of the day, who has been described as "a burning and shining light."

It is not wonderful, indeed, all things considered, that such should have been the case at the period of which I write. During the long and prosperous reign of the first Edward, Englishmen, while enjoying the blessings of freedom and order vigilantly guarded by law, had learned to speak their minds without fear, and with little hesitation; and, albeit nearly forty years had elapsed since the great king had been laid at rest in Westminster Abbey, they had not yet unlearned the lesson that an Englishman's words should be as free as his thoughts. Nor, so far, was public order in any danger from the utmost freedom of

speech ; for the House of Plantagenet was still so popular, that, had the reigning sovereign deliberately gone among his subjects in disguise, to learn what they thought of him, he would probably have heard nothing more offensive to his ear than complaints as to the rapacity of the royal purveyors. The day which I have lived to see was not yet come when a crazy priest, like John Ball, could rouse a populace to frenzy, or when a rude demagogue, like Wat Tyler, could lead on a rabble to plunder and bloodshed.

“Adam of Greenmead,” said the Thomelin of Winchester, as he rose to welcome my grandsire and myself ; “old kinsman, I am right glad to see thee and thy grandson too. Body o’ me, Arthur, it seems but yesterday when you were cock-bird height, and now you have grown as tall and handsome a lad as the girls would wish to set eyes on.”

“And how farest thou, Thomelin?” asked my grandsire, as he seated himself near the host, and I took a place by his side.

“Passing well, kinsman—passing well, the saints be thanked ; and it makes me all the better, methinks, since I see thee so hale and hearty.”

“For that matter,” said my grandsire, with an expression of discontent in his face, “I am hale as a man who has seen threescore and ten years can expect to be, and hearty as a man can hope to be in the days in which we live.”

“You are not pleased with the times we live in, kinsman,” remarked Thomelin.

“In truth, they are not much to my liking,” said my grandsire. “As we rode along, my mind went back to the time when King Edward hammered the stubborn Scots at Falkirk, and to the day when he entered London, and the Londoners kept holiday in honour of his victory.”

“Grand times, doubtless,” said Thomelin.

“Ay, you may well say so,” exclaimed my grandsire, with a tear in his eye. “England was then prosperous and contented. But now King Edward has been thirty-seven years in his tomb, and the world has well-nigh gone to ruin.”

“No, no, Adam,” protested Thomelin. “Matters are

not so bad as you fancy. The world goes on well enough—in fact, as well as ever—in its way. Men buy and sell, sow and reap, marry and give in marriage; and, albeit the king whom you serve is in his grave, we have a king who is bravest among the brave, and wisest among the wise.”

“But not so great as his grandfather was,” said the old man in a conclusive tone.

“Nevertheless, kinsman,” observed Thomelin, as if anxious to change the subject, “you have come to see London town once more.”

“Even so; and yet, God’s truth! I might have gone to my long home without taking so much trouble; for what is London to me? But Arthur, hearing that the lads of the town were to try their skill at the quintain before the Prince of Wales, would come, reason or none.”

“To see the display,” suggested Thomelin.

“No, to try his own hand; and trust me, if I know anything of such matters—and I ought—his chance is not small.”

“I doubt it not, kinsman—I doubt it not,” said Thomelin; “and yet I know not how he is to get a chance; for the match is, in some measure, confined to the Londoners, and strangers may not be admitted.”

“Tell that not to me,” replied my grandsire conclusively, and striking the table with his clenched fist. “In my younger days I have seen not only the sons of yeomen, but squires’ and knights’ sons take part in such diversions; and if rules were relaxed then they can be relaxed now.”

“Well, kinsman, we must see what can be done,” said Thomelin mildly, but somewhat doubtfully. “Meanwhile, kinsmen, you must eat and drink, and let me show to you what hospitality my house can afford, for the sake of Richard Tythering, whose blood we both have in our veins.”

“Ay; blood is thicker than water, as they say in the North,” responded my grandsire; “and trust me, Thomelin,” he added, “my heart warms to thee for thine own sake, and for that of thy mother; she was my first cousin.”

“And so, Arthur, my lad,” said Thomelin, turning to me, “thou art determined to win the peacock.”

“I know not whether I can win the peacock or not,”

answered I, trying not to appear too vain of my skill; "but I hope to do so; and, in any case, I'll do my best.

CHAPTER III

WINNING THE PEACOCK

ON the forenoon of St. John the Baptist's Day the Londoners crowded to Smithfield to celebrate the festival with sports and diversions; and thither I, mounting my horse, accompanied my grandsire and Thomelin of Winchester.

Various were the spectacles there exhibited to please the populace; and much was I interested with what I beheld. At one place a glee-woman was dancing round an unmuzzled bear, which endeavoured to seize her, while the keeper scourged the animal to excite its fury; at another, two men, in warlike attire, armed with brand and buckler, were playing at the sword-dance of the Anglo-Saxons to the sound of music, while a woman danced round them as they combated; at a third, wrestlers were exercising their skill in various attitudes; in one of which, said to have been derived from the ancient Greeks, two men, each mounted on the back of a comrade, encountered like knights on horseback, and endeavoured to secure victory by pulling his antagonist to the ground.

But the chief point of attraction was a broad space, inclosed with railings and covered with sawdust, where the youthful Londoners, in imitation of apprentices to chivalry, were about to display their dexterity at the quintain. In the courtyards of princes and feudal mag-nates, the quintain was a wooden figure, made to resemble Saladin the Great, or Bibars Bendocdar, or some other famous Saracen, holding a shield in one hand, and brandishing a sabre in the other. However, that erected in Smithfield was of a humbler description. In fact, it was very much like a turnstile with two arms, which revolved on a spindle, on one of which was a painted board resembling a shield, while from the other hung a bag filled with sand.

Mounted on horseback, the youth, armed with a long

staff or blunt lance, rode at the quintain, and aimed at the wooden shield. If he failed to strike it, all the spectators laughed him to scorn; and if he struck it without making an escape in time, he was exposed, not only to the ridicule of the spectators, but to the inconvenience of receiving a severe blow on the neck from the sand-bag.

In other days, when the game of quintain was played at Smithfield, squires and pages of the king's household had taken part in the diversion, and added interest to the competition. Such was no longer the case. On the present occasion, however, the crowd flocked to witness the contest with more than the ordinary curiosity; for it was known that John Hammond, Mayor of London, was to be present to award the prize; and it was rumoured that the mayor was to do so because the Prince of Wales intended to ride from Westminster to witness the competition.

As the hour when the competitors were to mount approached, the crowd, pressing, surging, and swaying, gathered round the inclosed space, and manifested their interest in the coming contest by shouting the names of their favourites. My grandsire, whose high head and white hair commanded so much reverence that the spectators instinctively made way for him, guided me to a place near the lord mayor's chair, and was evincing much anxiety to lay before that functionary my claim to compete for the peacock, when suddenly all attention was withdrawn from the quintain by a cry of "The prince comes—long live the Prince of Wales!"

I turned as the shout rose; and as the prince, with a train of young nobles, and squires, and pages, rode up to the lord mayor, I gazed for the first time, and earnestly, on the young hero, who, ere long, was to prove himself the flower of all the chivalry of his age. At that time Edward was not more than fifteen; but he was tall for his years, fair to look upon, and distinguished by the manly beauty and the intellectual air of the great Plantagenet race. Trained to feats of strength in the tilt-yard and in the forest, his frame was strong and vigorous, and his face glowed with health; and, as he rode forward and un-

covered his head, his grace and elegance of bearing moved the admiration of the multitude, who, with one voice, renewed their shouts of welcome and applause.

And now the business of the day commenced in earnest, and the youths of London, one after another, mounted and rode at the quintain. The result was not gratifying to the pride of the citizens. Indeed, fortune proved adverse to each competitor in turn. Some altogether missed the mark; others, after hitting the shield, failed to retire in time to escape the blow of the sand-bag; and several who, in both respects, were successful in two trials, failed in the third attempt, and were consequently judged to have forfeited all claim to the prize. The crowd jeered; the mayor looked gloomy; and the cavaliers surrounding the prince sneered in contempt of the city chivalry; and many of the Londoners who had intended to compete, discouraged by the failure of their compeers, and fearing to tempt fortune, deemed it more discreet to submit to obscurity than to expose themselves to ridicule, and declined to try their skill.

It was at this stage of the proceedings that my grand-sire, leading my horse by the rein, drew nigh to the chair of the lord mayor, and raised his voice.

“Sir,” said the old man, “my grandson, who, albeit not a Londoner, is a lad of mettle, and much given to exercises of this kind, would fain try his skill, if he had your permission so to do.”

“I know not how that may be,” replied the mayor, eyeing me with interest, “seeing that the competition is intended for the youths of the city; and if a stranger bore off the prize, men might say that——”

“That you had taken the children’s bread and given it to dogs,” interrupted I, with a disdainful toss of the head; “wherefore, my lord mayor, I will not trespass so far on your courtesy as to ask you to relax the rules.”

“A bold youth, on my faith,” said the mayor, starting and colouring. “However, my lord the prince shall decide.”

“By good St. George! my lord mayor,” exclaimed the prince, to whom my display of spirit seemed the reverse of displeasing, “were I in your place, I should certainly

relax the rules, in order to make the sport more worthy of the occasion."

"If such be your pleasure, my lord, I will strain a point;" and my grandsire waving his hat in the air, said—

"Now, Arthur, lad, ride; and bear in mind that it is to the prince you are beholden for the privilege granted thee."

I lost no time in obeying my grandsire; and, a new candidate for the peacock having been announced, the crowd, with renewed interest, turned again to the inclosed space, and speculated on my chances of success. Nor, stranger as I was, did I meet with a discouraging reception. At first, indeed, my rustic garments evoked remarks not highly complimentary. But a closer examination disarmed prejudice; and my firm seat, my equestrian skill, and something of juvenile audacity with which I handled my blunt lance, created such an impression in my favour, that the crowd raised an inciting cheer; and the prince, turning to Roger, Lord De Ov, a young baron of high rank, who rode by his side, exclaimed—

"A strong and handsome stripling, and one likely to acquit himself with honour, here and elsewhere."

"A likely lad is Arthur," muttered Thomelin of Winchester to my grandsire; "and, in the prince's presence, will do credit to his bringing up."

Nor did mine host of the Falcon speak without prudence. Managing my steed with perfect facility, and displaying with my weapon a familiarity that had not characterised the Londoners who had preceded me, I spurred towards the quintain, struck the shield fairly, and, ere the spindle could revolve, retreated with seeming ease amid shouts of applause. Three times I repeated the attempt, and on each occasion performed the feat with such success, that the crowd shouted louder and louder in compliment to my skill.

"Gallantly and dexterously done," said the prince, as, flushed with exertion and excitement, I was brought to the presence of the mayor, and uncovered my head.

I bowed low to the compliment so sincerely expressed.

"Thy name, youth?" said the prince.

"My lord," I answered, "my name is Arthur."

"And your surname?" continued the prince.

"I have no surname, my lord," replied I; "but since I won the ram at the wrestling match at Windsor, on May Day, men have called me Arthur Winram."

"Arthur Winram," said the prince, smiling. "Beshrew me! it sounds well, and is a name that a ballad-maker would deem worthy to put in verse. However," continued he, "I trust you will live to make yourself a name worthy of your skill. Meanwhile," he added, "carry with you this comfort, that your performance to-day has been marked and appreciated by your king's son."

"Ha! my lord," interposed the Lord De Ov, "this hardly beseems you. We have already tarried here long enough. Why waste words on this young rustic? Let us ride;" and he laid his hand on the prince's rein.

"Roger De Ov, you forget yourself," said the prince haughtily, as he was led off, after exchanging courtesies with the mayor; while I, having watched his departure with a flashing eye, turned to my grandsire, whose brow was bent darkly and sternly.

"Grandsire," asked I, my heart swelling with rage and mortification, "who is that man?"

"What matters it, Arthur, my lad?" answered my grandsire, recovering with a start. "Be calm and be silent, and thine hour will come. Patience is a good palfrey, and will carry thee through many a day's journey."

"I could feel it in my heart to follow the miscreant, and strike him, even in the prince's presence," said I.

"And ruin yourself for ever. Nay, nay. Better let us carry the peacock you have won to the Falcon, and drink a cup with Thomelin, my cousin, ere we mount and ride homeward."

"Ay," said Thomelin; "let us to the Falcon."

And we went.

CHAPTER IV

AT MY GRANDSIRE'S HOMESTEAD

My grandsire's homestead, as I have already intimated, stood on the outskirts of the royal forest of Windsor. It

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was a humble enough tenement, but not without its comforts, and it occupied a fair spot of ground, shadowed by ancient trees, and surrounded by green sward stretching away into meadows by the river side, where flowers grew and kine grazed, and young maidens sat tending their fathers' flocks and singing the ballads of their country.

Nobody could deny that the place was fair to look upon and pleasant to dwell in ; and my grandsire, save when in his gloomy moods, was in the habit, not only of saying that such was the case, but of expressing contentment with his lot. In this respect I was certainly far from sharing his sentiments ; and every day I experienced a stronger desire to escape from an obscurity which was ill suited to my aspiring nature.

My existence was surrounded with a mystery which I in vain endeavoured to penetrate. Of my father I had no recollection, and little knowledge. I was given to understand that he ceased to live when I was an infant in the cradle, and that, during the troubles which distracted England at the opening of King Edward's reign, he perished under cruel, and somewhat ignominious, circumstances. But I suspected much more than had ever been told me. In fact, from vague hints and allusions, I gathered sufficient to inspire me with the conviction that his tragic fate, though its immediate cause was a political conspiracy, was, in reality, the result of enmity engendered by a political family feud. That my mother, a sad, religious, and broken-hearted woman, showed much anxiety to keep me in ignorance of the facts was evident ; and I was given to understand that my safety—even my life—depended on my name and origin remaining a profound secret.

I have, however, hinted that my imagination was lively ; and, as it was frequently at work on the subject, I was soon led by it to the conclusion that I was of different flesh and blood from those among whom my lot had been cast ; that my father was, at least, a man of knightly rank ; and that I was, probably, the heir of a pedigree which a Montacute or a Merley might have envied. My pride, stimulated by my imagination, became daily higher ; and,

buoyed up with some knowledge of grammar and letters acquired from the tuition of a neighbouring priest, I early cherished ideas far above my station, and dreamt of chances and possibilities that might raise my fortunes to a level with my aspirations.

Either by accident or design, my grandsire fed my ambition by the kind of conversation in which he indulged, on winter evenings, by the blazing fire of wood that warmed our little hall. Plain yeoman as the old man seemed, he had been a good deal in the world; and he knew much of its ways. In youth he had, as a warrior, served King Edward—the first of the name—and he delighted to tell of the battles and the sieges to which he had ridden under the banner of that mighty monarch. Fired by the countless stories of war and victory, I conceived an irresistible desire to excel in arms; and, ere reaching my fourteenth year, I began to despise the sports and athletic exercises of the young peasants and villagers who deemed themselves my equals, and to endeavour, as well as I could, to acquire accomplishments which qualified youths of gentle blood for knighthood and the honours of chivalry.

My success was greater than might have been anticipated, under the circumstances. Excluded from the training bestowed in feudal castles on the sons of nobles and knights, my disadvantages were obvious. But patience and perseverance always will do much; and I set myself deliberately to acquire skill and dexterity in the use of the sword, and riding at the ring and the quintain; and, with instructions from my grandsire, I soon found my patience and perseverance rewarded. At the exercise of quintain, especially, I was so perfect a performer, in my own opinion, that I was all eagerness for an opportunity of proving my superiority. When, therefore, I learned that, on the day of St. John the Baptist, the Londoners of my own age, or thereabouts, were to compete for the peacock, in the presence of the Prince of Wales, I insisted on my grandsire conducting me to the capital, that I might display my proficiency in public, and that I might advance my fortune by exhibiting, under the eye of England's heir, the skill and dexterity which I had acquired by

constant exercise among the trees that shadowed our quiet grange.

Naturally enough, the result was flattering to my juvenile vanity; and the events of the day on which I won the peacock made a strong impression on my mind. It opened up to me views of life with which I was previously quite unacquainted, and quickened my desire to begin my career in earnest. My life of obscurity became more and more distasteful. Even the lot of forest outlaws seemed infinitely preferable to mine; and while I essayed to look cheerful as I drove out the cows to the meadows, and talked to the hinds as they gathered the harvest into the barns, I was bitterly cursing the Lord De Ov for cutting short my interview with the prince, and, in melancholy mood, tasking my ingenuity to discover some way of again bringing myself under his notice.

At this season, Thomelin of Winchester happened to visit our homestead, and was welcomed with the hospitality due to a friend and kinsman.

"And what news bringest thou, Thomelin?" asked my grandsire.

"None likely to cheer thy heart," answered the host of the Falcon. "Thou knowest the Vipseys, in Yorkshire?"

"Ay do I," said my grandsire; "they are brooks that rise every other year out of springs, and rush rapidly to the sea near the promontory called Flamborough."

"And thou knowest," continued Thomelin, "that their drying up is deemed a good sign, and that their running is held to be a sure presage of famine or pestilence?"

"I have so heard in other days," said my grandsire contemptuously; "but then, again, I have known them run, and better run, and neither plague nor famine come in consequence."

"Anyhow," said Thomelin, not caring to dispute the point, "we are almost certain to have more war."

"More war?" exclaimed my grandsire.

"By my faith," said Thomelin, "little doubt can there be as to that. Think how matters now stand. King Edward makes a peace with Philip of Valois, and, not just in the best humour, comes home; and no sooner is his back turned than Philip causes twelve knights of

Brittany—all our king's friends and allies—to be arrested, without rhyme or reason, and beheaded without trial."

"Ho, ho!" exclaimed my grandsire.

"Well," continued Thomelin, "all the kinsmen of the murdered men have taken up arms; and Godfrey Harcourt, one of the great lords of Normandy, has come to England, and got a promise from King Edward to avenge them. Everybody who knows aught of King Edward knows what that means."

"Doubtless," said my grandsire, "it means such a war as has not been seen in thy time."

"And," added Thomelin, "when we have more war, trust me, we will have more taxes, and already they are hard enough to bear. And yet, if King Edward would just make up his mind, instead of being longer fooled by foreigners, as he has been, to take an English army to the Continent, I see not why war should not turn out both to the honour and profit of the nation."

"I hold with you, kinsman," said I, sliding into the conversation; "and beshrew me if aught would be more to my mind than to cross the narrow seas, to fight the braggart Frenchmen."

"You would fain see something of war, then, Arthur?" observed Thomelin, startled at my enthusiasm.

"Yes," replied I, in a tone of decision. "Life, at the longest, is but short; and, to me, every day seems wasted that I pass in obscurity."

It was while my mind was wholly bent on this subject—while I was brooding over the past, and panting to penetrate the future—that Fortune, as if in compassion, threw in my way a great opportunity, and enabled me, under favourable auspices, to commence the arduous enterprise of climbing the ladder of life.

CHAPTER V

JACK FLETCHER

It was a warm day in the month of September—one of those autumnal days when the sun still shines in all its vigour—and my grandsire, with me as his companion

was leaning on his staff, strolling about in the neighbourhood of his homestead, and grumbling somewhat savagely at the rapacity of the royal purveyors, by whom we had recently, to our consternation and our cost, been visited; when we were suddenly roused by the tramp of a horse's hoofs, and, looking round, found ourselves face to face with a cavalier of thirty-five whose dress and demeanour at once proclaimed him a man of high rank.

I confess, indeed, that I was lost in admiration, and stood silent with surprise. The stranger was by far the most striking personage I had ever seen, and, in point of appearance, even rivalled the imaginary heroes of my boyish day-dreams. He was about six feet in height, and in the flower of manhood, with a figure admirably proportioned, long-drawn features, a thoughtful brow, a noble air, and an eye bright with valour and intelligence. His aspect indicated more than regal pride, modified, however, by frankness of spirit; and as he approached, with a hawk on his wrist, a bugle at his girdle, and two hounds running at his horse's feet, his bearing was easy as well as dignified, and he accosted my grandsire with the tone of one who had at once the right to command and the privilege to be familiar.

"Good-day, friend," said he, reining in his steed.

"Sir, good-day," replied my grandsire briefly, and with an indifference in accent and manner to which it was evident the other was unaccustomed.

"I have lost my way in the forest," remarked the cavalier, after a pause, during which he appeared to reflect; "and yet methinks I should not consider that a misfortune, since it has conducted me to so pleasant a spot."

"Yes," replied my grandsire, "I thank God that my lines have fallen in a pleasant place."

"And your lot is, therefore, to be envied by men who dwell in king's palaces."

"Mayhap it might," said my grandsire; "but that the exactions of the king's men are so unjust and oppressive."

"Ha!" exclaimed the stranger, as if in a tone of inquiry.

"Yes," continued my grandsire resolutely, "never in my time has there been anything to compare to it, albeit this is the fourth reign in which I have lived. Did King Edward but know of the tyranny and rapacity exercised in his name, and that his subjects live in dread of the purveyor's horn, he would take such order that the commons should no longer be so outrageously plundered."

"Doubtless," replied the cavalier, "the king would do what is right and lawful."

"I would that I had some talk with him," said my grandsire. "I could tell him many things that he is little likely to hear from knight or noble."

"Expound your grievances to me," said the cavalier; "I am not altogether without influence at the king's court, and I may even have power to set matters right."

"Enter my house, then, if you deem me not unworthy of such an honour," said my grandsire, as we reached the door.

"Right gladly," replied the stranger, dismounting; and, resigning his steed to my care, he followed my grandsire.

Evidently with curiosity, the cavalier, on entering the little hall, examined several pieces of armour and weapons that had been in fashion late in the thirteenth century, especially a huge iron club that was suspended on the wall. But when, having stabled the stranger's steed, I appeared in the hall, I found him seated at the board with my grandsire, partaking of such good cheer as the tenement afforded, and quaffing horns of ale, with apparent relish. Ere the meal was at an end my grandsire had uttered all his complaints against the royal purveyors, and was evidently delighted with his guest; and, as his heart opened, he did not fail to express his satisfaction.

"Courtier," exclaimed the old man, almost with enthusiasm, "I begin to believe that thou art an honest fellow."

"I would fain hope, my friend," replied the stranger, "that men who know me best would so report me."

"I believe it," said my grandsire; "and," added he more soberly, "I should know men when I see them; for in my life I have held discourse with men of all ranks,

and with some whose names will live for ever in chronicle and song."

"Indeed?" quoth the cavalier, struck by a remark which gave him a higher idea of his new acquaintance. "I perceive, then, that you have not passed your life in this quiet homestead."

My grandsire laughed, as if in scorn of the thought.

"No," replied he, recovering his serenity, "not at this homestead did I pass my early years, but where banners were flying, and bridles ringing, and swords flashing. My father, who was well known in his day as the Farrier of the Strand, fought with his iron club, which hangs on my wall, for the king at Evesham, under the banner of Lord Merley; and when my father departed this life, I was taken to the North, by the Lord Merley, and there trained to arms. I then went into the service of the good King Edward, and by him was much trusted. I was with the king when he was in danger at Ghent; I was with him when he conquered at Falkirk; I was with him when he died at Burgh-on-the-Sands."

"And how came your services to pass unrewarded and unrecognized?"

"Listen, courtier, and learn. When the old king was laid in his grave, I served his son as I had served himself; and how I fought at Burton and at Borough Bridge it would ill become my tongue to tell. But this cannot be gainsaid; it was my hand that struck down the rebel Clifford; and it was my hand that seized the rebel Lancaster. However, evil days came on apace; fate went against my king; and leal service could avail naught. At length, when all was over, and when, at Berkeley Castle, he was cruelly murdered, I crept hither to pass my days in peace; and I have since lived on, persuading myself that I cannot be altogether useless on earth, since it is God's pleasure that I survive the evil times I have seen."

"Evil days they were," said the cavalier, as he rose and paced the floor, evidently much agitated by memories which my grandsire's story had recalled.

I gazed with some surprise on the effect which had been produced; and my grandsire was in such perplexity,

that he seemed quite relieved when the cavalier turned towards me and eyed me keenly.

"And this," said he, "is your grandson?"

"Yes," answered the old man; "my grandson, Arthur, whom I have taught to serve God and honour the king, and whom it lately pleased my lord the prince to commend, at Smithfield, for his brave looks and gallant bearing."

"A goodly youth, on my faith," said the cavalier; "and one who it seems to me, might acquit himself with honour in a higher sphere."

"His father was not of our rank," replied my grandsire. "But that is a long story, which it would pain me to tell, and you and him to hear."

"Another time, mayhap, I may hear it," said the cavalier, not without exhibiting some interest in what my grandsire had told him; "meanwhile," continued he, "it is time for me to ride towards Windsor, which I will do, if you will put me in the way. But, my friend," added he kindly, "fail not to visit me at the castle, and bring thither your grandson, and I will so requite your hospitality as to convince you that I am no churl."

"Come to Windsor," exclaimed my grandsire, "to be driven from the gate like a mangy cur! No, courtier; men shall never have it in their power to say that such was my fate."

"Fear not such a repulse," said the stranger. "Ask for me; and, if you so do, trust me you will be admitted with all courtesy."

"And, pray thee, by what name are you known?" added my grandsire.

The cavalier looked puzzled, but took from his hand a ring.

"Ask for Jack Fletcher," he said; "and if that suffices not," added he, presenting the ring, "show this, and, at the sight of it, gates and doors will open to admit you."

My grandsire bowed low as he received the ring; and the stranger rising to depart, took leave of me kindly, sallied forth, mounted his horse, and with my grandsire showing the way through the forest, and talking of deer

and wild cattle, rode towards Windsor, as he had come, with his hawk on his wrist, his bugle at his girdle, and his hounds running at his side.

“Now,” soliloquised I, as I watched his departure, “I will wager that the visit of this stranger is to exercise some important influence on my destiny.”

CHAPTER VI

WAR WITH FRANCE

At the time when the cavalier who called himself Jack Fletcher lost his way in Windsor Forest, and accepted such hospitality as my grandsire's tenement could afford, King Edward, as Thomelin of Winchester had predicted, was preparing to renew that war which made Englishmen for a time almost masters of France. In order to render my narrative the more intelligible, it is necessary to refer to the origin of that war, to the events by which it had been distinguished, and to the stage at which it had arrived.

It was on the 1st of February, 1328—the year in the course of which I drew my first breath—that Charles, King of France, the youngest of the three sons of Philip the Fair, and brother of Isabel, wife of our second Edward, died without male heirs. For the vacant throne—from which, centuries earlier, Hugh Capet pushed the descendant of Charlemagne, and to which subsequently St. Louis gave dignity—several candidates appeared, the chief of whom were Philip of Valois and Edward of England. Philip, relying on the fact that the Salic law excluded females from reigning, claimed the crown of France as heir male of the old king. Edward, without denying the validity of the Salic law, pleaded that, so far as succession was concerned, it did not bar the sons of a king's daughter. The Parliament of Paris, however, was appealed to; and, being much under the influence of Robert, Lord of Artois, who was Philip's brother-in-law, the Parliament decided in favour of Philip; and Edward, then young and governed by his mother, Queen Isabel, and Roger de Mortimer, so far bent his pride as to visit

France, and do homage at Amiens for Guienne and Ponthieu. But he privately protested beforehand against the homage he was about to perform; and perhaps he felt little regret when Philip's interference in Scottish affairs gave him a fair excuse for a rupture, and for not only renewing his claim, but submitting it to the arbitrament of the sword.

Meanwhile, Philip of Valois had involved himself in a scandalous quarrel with Robert, Lord of Artois, to whom he owed his crown; and Robert, threatened with vengeance and destruction, reached England, disguised as a merchant, and exerted all his eloquence to rouse Edward's ambition. Circumstances favoured his exertions in this respect. Enraged at his exclusion from a throne which he believed to be his by hereditary right, and exasperated at the aid given by Philip to the Scots, Edward lent a willing ear to Robert's suggestions; and, resolving to avail himself of the state of affairs on the Continent, which was most favourable to his projects, he prepared without delay to put his fortune to the test.

At that time, in fact, the Flemings were up in arms. The Count of Flanders, a faithful ally of Philip of Valois, was guilty of tyrannies which drove his subjects to revolt; and Jacob von Arteveldt, a brewer, who ruled in Ghent, and exercised an enormous influence all over Flanders, formed a great league against Philip and the Count, and invoked Edward's aid. Not unwilling to interfere, the King of England entered into an alliance with the Emperor of Germany; and sailing from the Orwell, in July, 1338, he landed in Flanders to pursue his schemes of conquest.

Taking up his residence at Antwerp, Edward linked himself in close friendship with the Flemings, and prepared for active operations; and Philip, supported by John, the blind King of Bohemia, by the Spaniards, and the Genoese, prepared to defend the dominions which he called his own. For a year little or nothing was done. But in November, 1339, the English began the war by wasting Cambresis; and about the middle of October, Philip of Valois advanced with a mighty army to give the invaders battle. No battle, however, took place. The

French retreated without striking a blow; and Edward, after having assumed the title and arms of the kings of France, returned to England to make arrangements for pursuing the prize on which his heart was set.

By this time the sympathies of the English nation were enlisted in the king's struggle. No sooner, indeed, had the war begun than Philip of Valois ordered his admirals to make a descent on England; and these master corsairs, approaching the coast with a fleet manned with Normans, Picards, and Spaniards, plundered Southampton, Sandwich, Winchelsea, Rye, Dover, and Portsmouth. Everywhere they were guilty of fearful violence; and when Edward returned to England, he was surrounded by multitudes, complaining loudly of the outrages that had been committed in his absence.

"O king!" cried the populace, "our towns have been burned, our houses pillaged, our young men slain, and our maidens deflowered."

"Be patient," replied Edward, "and rest assured that my turn is coming, and that I will not only protect you from your enemies, but make them pay dearly for all they have done."

Faithful to his promise, the king fitted out fleets to defend the coast, and prepared a great armament at Ipswich, with which to return to the Continent. It was the summer of 1340, and, every preparation having been made, Edward sailed from the Orwell; and on Saturday, the 24th of June, approached the coast of Flanders. As there were rumours of mighty preparations to prevent a landing, a sharp look-out was kept from the admiral's ship, and suddenly the sailors, who were aloft, shouted that they saw masts.

"Who will they turn out to be?" asked Edward.

"Doubtless," was the answer, "this is the fleet kept at sea by the French, under the admirals who have done England so much harm."

"Well," said the king, "I have, for a long time, wished to meet these men; and now, please God and St. George, we will fight with them."

As the king spoke, all doubts were removed. Before him lay a fleet of a hundred and twenty vessels, under

the command of admirals who had peremptory orders not to allow him to set foot on continental soil.

Every man on board the English ships was now on the alert, and a great naval battle began, and speedily assumed an aspect of excessive fury. Being able and determined men, the French admirals made every exertion, and, having the advantage of numbers, they pressed hard on their foes. But, in spite of the great odds against them, the English fought dauntlessly; and, after the conflict had raged for several hours, the French lost heart and hope, and leaped by hundreds into the sea. By seven o'clock in the evening the victory was complete, and Edward, landing next morning, set off on foot, with his knights, on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Ardembourg, and afterwards rode to Ghent to visit Queen Philippa, who, in that city, had just given birth to her son, John of Gaunt.

While Edward was destroying the French fleet at Sluys, Philip of Valois was making war on Edward's brother-in-law, the Count of Hainault. It was of importance that he should at once hear the news; but he was a man of such violent temper that none of his knights had the courage to tell what had happened. At length the court jester undertook the delicate duty of informing his master of the loss he had sustained.

"Cowardly English!" said the jester, with bitter emphasis.

"What do you say?" asked Philip.

"Cowardly English!" repeated the jester. "Dastardly English! False-hearted English!"

"Why do you call them so?" asked Philip.

"Because," answered the jester, "they durst not leap out of their ships as our men did when they fought at Sluys."

Philip beginning to understand, uttered an exclamation of pain; and, on learning all, he flew into a violent passion, retreated towards Arras, broke up his army, and employed the mediation of the Countess of Hainault, who was his sister, and mother of the Queen of England. Edward, eager for a meeting, proposed to decide their dispute by a single combat; but the Frenchman declined

on the ground that the challenge was addressed to Philip of Valois, not to the King of France, and could not, therefore, be intended for him. After some negotiation, a peace was brought about by the Countess of Hainault's mediation, and Edward, who was by this time reduced to extreme poverty, returned to England to brood over the failure of his great schemes.

It was now the spring of 1340, and a renewal of the war seemed somewhat improbable. But, ere long, an event occurred in Brittany which produced unexpected consequences. In 1341, the Duke of Brittany died without issue, and two candidates appeared to claim his Duchy. One of these was Charles of Blois, who had espoused the duke's niece, and claimed Brittany in her right; the other was the duke's brother, John, Count of Montfort, who claimed as heir male. Philip of Valois, who now forgot the Salic law, and only remembered that Charles of Blois was his own nephew, decided in Charles's favour; and Montfort, having implored the support of the English king, seized upon the strongholds in the duchy. Unfortunately, the earl was taken prisoner early in the war; but his countess, Joan, the Fleming, bravely maintained the struggle, and, aided by an English force under Sir Walter Manny, made herself famous by her defence of Hennebon.

While contending with countless difficulties, the Countess of Montfort came to England to represent her case to the English king; and Edward, who was deeply interested in what was occurring on the Continent, sent Robert, Lord of Artois, with an army to aid her efforts. The expedition was not fortunate. Attacked suddenly at Vannes, and taken by surprise, Artois received wounds of which he soon died; and Edward, vowing to avenge him, embarked to conduct the war in person.

It was late in 1343 when the King of England landed in Brittany, and took the field with the hope of conquering. But fortune proved so adverse that nothing but his martial skill saved him from humiliation. While before Vannes he found himself threatened by the heir of France and Charles of Blois, at the head of a French army four times more numerous than that under his banner;

and his doom looked dark. However, the French, finding that he had taken up a very strong position, and not particularly eager to try conclusions with the conqueror of Halidon and Sluys, did not venture on an attack; and, after the hostile armies had lain for some time facing each other, two cardinals, sent by the pope, appeared in the character of peacemakers.

Edward had scarcely a choice. He was surrounded by enemies, and almost destitute of provisions; and the coasts were so vigilantly guarded by the fleets of Spain, that he despaired of receiving supplies from England. His men were, in consequence, suffering much. At first, however, he would not consent to peace; but the two cardinals, having made great exertions, at length succeeded in bringing the belligerents to reason, and ambassadors on both sides were nominated to confer in the Priory of the Magdalen at Malestroit. Eventually they came to terms; and, a truce for three years having been sworn to, Edward embarked for England about the close of February, 1344, and landed at Weymouth, probably with the idea that he had seen the last of the Continent, and had more than enough of continental war.

If so, he was much mistaken. Scarcely, in fact, was Edward's back turned when Philip of Valois startled Christendom with a display of the perfidy and cruelty which characterised his life. At a tournament, to which the Bretons went without misgiving, twelve lords, who had fought for the cause of Montfort, were arrested. No charge was brought against them; nor were they allowed the benefit of a trial. Without having assigned a cause, or given the opportunity of a defence, Philip caused them to be conducted to the scaffold and beheaded.

This tragic event caused the utmost horror. The friends and kinsmen of the murdered men took up arms, and went in a body to the Montfort standard; and Godfrey Harcourt, a great baron of Normandy, finding himself in danger of sharing their fate, escaped to England, and obtained from Edward a vow to avenge the lawless execution of his allies.

CHAPTER VII

WINDSOR CASTLE

My grandsire, much to my surprise, and much to my disappointment, showed no inclination whatever to avail himself of the cavalier's invitation, or to put the hospitality of Windsor Castle to the test. At first, indeed, he was very enthusiastic about the visit of a guest so brilliant, and pleased to make comparisons between him and the high-bred personages whom he had seen in his earlier days. But no sooner did a week pass than all this enthusiasm began to die away, and the aged worthy seemed to give up all idea of pursuing the acquaintance he had accidentally formed, and evinced considerable and increasing uneasiness about possession of the ring which had been left as the pledge of welcome and good cheer. In vain I endeavoured to persuade him to seek out the stranger; he only replied that Jack Fletcher was, doubtless, a very merry companion, who doubtless also, loved an adventure, and would, on occasion, say more in an hour than he would stand to in a year.

"But the ring," urged I.

"Ay," exclaimed my grandsire, shaking his head in evident perplexity. "That is the rub; what is to be done with the ring I know not."

"I will tell you," suggested I, perceiving my advantage, and resolved to follow it up. "Intrust me with the ring, and I will ride to Windsor, seek out the courtier, and place it in his hands."

My grandsire did not much approve of my plan; and my mother, on hearing of my proposal, protested loudly against it. But I had a will of my own, and an idea, which haunted me night and day, that the stranger's visit was, in some way, linked with my destiny; and believing, at all events, that he could aid me to emerge from obscurity, I held to my intention with all the tenacity and determination of my nature. Nothing daunted by the opposition of my grandsire and the alarm of my mother, I never rested till I obtained their sanction to what I, at that age, deemed a grand enterprise; and having, at

length, by perseverance, removed all obstacles, I prepared for my journey.

Accordingly, one morning in October, I arrayed myself so as to appear to the best advantage, mounted my black steed, and rode through the forest, with a feeling that I was on the road to fortune. I confess, however, that, as I neared the town of Windsor, my confidence in myself gradually weakened; and, as I reflected how little qualified I was by experience and knowledge of life to carry the project of boldly pushing my fortune to a successful termination, I not only repented of having ventured on such an errand, but almost made up my mind to turn rein, ride back to my grandsire's homestead, abandon once and for ever all ambitious ideas, and live, with independence, if not content, tending the oxen, and tilling the soil.

It happened, however, that my imagination, which, in reality, had led me to undertake this journey to Windsor, did not altogether desert me in the middle. In the midst of my doubts, I conjured up, for the hundredth time, a brilliant future; and feeling, as if by instinct, that my fortunes were hanging on the decision of the moment, I summoned pride to my aid, and pursued my way. My shyness, natural to a youth reared in the solitude of a grange, was rather inconvenient at the moment; but I have hinted that I was not without courage. I will go further, and say that I was not without audacity; and it was with the fixed purpose of doing, daring, and risking all, that I spurred into the little town of Windsor, rode up the ascent that leads to the castle, and, reining in at the massive gate, cast a look of awe at the towers, and turrets, and fortifications of the Norman stronghold, from which the standard of England floated in the autumn breeze.

The warder appeared, as in duty bound, and demanded on what errand I came, and looked calmly on as I answered that I wished to be admitted to the presence of a cavalier who called himself "Jack Fletcher."

"Jack Fletcher?" he repeated, opening his eyes, and regarding me with a glance which seemed to intimate that he recognised the name, but was not quite certain whether or not to acknowledge that he did.

"I come at the invitation of the cavalier I have named," said I, endeavouring to appear as courageous as possible; "and, to remove any doubts, I bring a token, which I was given to understand would secure me the privilege of being admitted to his presence."

I produced the ring; the warder looked at it, and bent his head.

"All right," said he; "enter, and presently you will be conducted to him you seek."

As the warder spoke, the gate opened; and, at a signal from him, I rode into the courtyard, where squires and knights, gaily dressed, were loitering about, and talking of adventures in love and war, and feats of arms. I remarked, with surprise, that several of them had one eye bound up with silk; and I afterwards learned that they had taken a solemn vow, in presence of the ladies and the peacock, never again to see with both eyes till they had performed certain deeds in arms against the French.

While I, having dismounted, stood looking with a feeling of that wonder produced by novelty on this gay scene, and somewhat astonished at my eccentricity in venturing into such a place, a young man of noble aspect and bearing approached and addressed me.

"Youth," said he with a smile, "you have come hither to see Jack Fletcher."

I bowed with great respect; for the air and appearance of the young noble impressed me with a sense of his importance; and I showed the ring, the influence of which on the warder I had carefully noted.

"Follow me, then," said he, smiling, "and I will lead you to his presence; though, in truth, it was an old man and not a youth for whom I expected to do that office."

I was by this time much too agitated to explain or reply; and I followed my guide like one in a dream, as he passed through passages and galleries. At length he halted at a door, and, drawing aside a curtain, spoke some words, which to me sounded like an order for execution. Mechanically, however, I entered, and, with my heart beating, and my brain whirling, and all my courage, all my audacity vanished, found myself face to face with the cavalier whose figure had, for weeks, been present to my imagination, and

whose words had, for weeks, echoed in my ear. He wore a black velvet jacket, and a hat of beaver, which became him much; and, as he turned his eye upon me, the truth as to who he was flashed, for the first time, so vividly and rapidly on my mind, that I stood stock-still, and almost felt as if I should have sunk to the floor.

My confusion and embarrassment, however, were so evident, that they pleaded for me more eloquently than words could have done; and he appeared all anxiety to put me at my ease.

"Brave youth," said he, "be not alarmed at finding yourself in a strange place; but make yourself as easy as if you were in your grandsire's grange. Why came he not with you, as he promised?"

"My lord," answered I, bending my knee, and trying to take courage, "my grandsire, on reflection, deemed it prudent not to intrude on the strength of the invitation which you gave in your courtesy; but intrusted me with the ring to restore to you, which I now do;" and, with great respect, I suited the action to the word.

I thought that a shade of disappointment passed over his countenance as I spoke; and I shrewdly guessed that it had been his wish to question my grandsire further on the tragic events of the late reign, on which their conversation had formerly turned, and which at the time had produced so strong an effect.

"Well," said he, after a pause, "men who have seen many years must be permitted to do as seems best in their own eyes; and, moreover, methinks we ought not to murmur too loudly at his absence, since he has sent you in his stead; and now that we have you here, youth," he added, with a smile, "you shall not leave us at your own pleasure. You, as I gathered, wished to be a warrior. Will you choose between my service and that of the Prince of Wales?"

"My lord," I replied, more and more embarrassed, "I fear me I am little qualified, by breeding or accomplishments, to serve either; and, even if it happened to be otherwise with me, I could not venture to choose."

"Ah," said he, with charming frankness, "I see how it is. The prince is of your own age, and that is a circumstance which always tends to attract, especially in

early youth. So let us consider the question settled, and I will at once have you installed as one of his pages."

So saying, and while I stared in amazement at the result of my journey to Windsor, he rose, took me by the arm, and talking of my grandsire as he went, conducted me to the tennis-court, where the prince and his companions were amusing themselves at play.

My guide, who every moment acquired additional importance in my eyes, stopped as we entered, and eyed the prince with a glance of high pride.

"I bring you," said he, "a youth of strength and courage, whom you will pleasure me by admitting among your pages; and I recommend him to your favour as the grandson of a man who, in his day and generation, served your progenitors faithfully and well."

"The hero of the quintain match at Smithfield!" exclaimed the prince. "My lord," he continued, "he is welcome for his grandsire's sake and his own."

"My lord," said I to the prince, "I pray you to pardon my seeming boldness. Had I known all I should not have dreamt of presenting myself at Windsor."

"Ah!" exclaimed the prince, with great good-humour; "you would not have come on Jack Fletcher's invitation had you known that Jack Fletcher was the king. But in that case I might have found you out; for I want striplings of courage and likelihood around me; and I have thought of you as such ever since the day when you won the peacock."

CHAPTER VIII

EDWARD THE BLACK PRINCE

To enable my readers to form some idea of the position which was occupied by the Prince of Wales at the time when I, Arthur Winram—for by this surname I was now known—was admitted to the castle of Windsor, and taken into his service as page, I must go back a few years to relate such particulars as to his birth and boyhood as may convey a notion of the advantages he had inherited and the training he had received.

It was at York, and in the minster of that capital of

the North, that, one Sunday in January, 1328, Edward the king, then sixteen, espoused Philippa, one of the four daughters whom William, Count of Hainault, surnamed the Good, had by his wife Joan, who was a princess of the line of Capet, and sister of Philip of Valois, to whom the Parliament of France adjudged the crown which St. Louis had worn. The marriage, being brought about by the king's mother, Isabel, and Roger de Mortimer, was not at first regarded with favour in England. In fact, people expressed much discontent with the business. But for once the instincts of the English deceived them. It was a love match after all ; and ere long the young queen displayed so much excellence and so many amiable qualities, that she became more popular than any Queen of England had ever been, with the exception, it must be admitted, of Eleanor of Castile.

Nothing, probably, contributed more to the change of sentiment on the part of the English than the birth of the son destined to so glorious a career and so melancholy an end. At Woodstock—a sylvan palace associated with the memories of the Norman and early Plantagenet kings, and with the touching romance of Rosamond Clifford—Edward, Prince of Wales, first saw the light. It was ten o'clock on the morning of Friday, the 15th of June, 1330, when he was ushered into existence, and excited the admiration of the queen's household by his magnificent appearance.

No time was lost in sending a messenger to inform the king that a son had been born to him, and an heir to the house of Plantagenet ; and on hearing the welcome news, and that the prince, just cradled at Woodstock, was a marvellously fine infant, and likely one day to be a most handsome man, the king gave a right royal reward to Thomas Prior, who had the good luck to carry the message.

Intelligence of the prince's birth proved hardly less welcome to the nation than to the king. The event was talked of with enthusiasm in every town and hamlet ; and people told wonderful stories of the royal infant's remarkable size and beauty, the fineness of his limbs, and his state cradle, painted with designs from the Evangelists.

Everywhere the young mother and her son were the subjects of conversation, and portraits of them, at the period, began to form favourite models for the Virgin and Child.

The king was, doubtless, well pleased at the interest that was manifested; and, in order that the public might participate in the rejoicings that followed the birth of England's heir, he proclaimed his intention of holding a grand tournament in London. Accordingly, the lists were erected in Cheapside, and a gay company of knights and ladies assembled on the occasion.

The ceremony, however, was interrupted by an accident that caused some unpleasantness. At the upper end of the street a gallery had been erected for the accommodation of the queen and her ladies; and, while the tilting was taking place, the scaffolding on which the gallery was reared gave way, and the structure fell to the ground. Great was the fright, loud the screaming, and alarming the confusion. Luckily enough, nothing fatal had occurred; but the king, much enraged, threatened to punish the workmen. Philippa, however, interceded in their behalf; and Edward, pacified by her mediation, and soothed by her earnest entreaties, consented to pardon their carelessness.

While the tournament was held in Cheapside in honour of his birth, the prince was passing his childhood under the charge of women. Joan of Oxford was his nurse; Matilda Plumpton was rocker of his cradle; and the Lady St. Omer, wife of a brave knight, was his governess. But no sooner was he old enough for his book than he was intrusted to the charge of Walter Burley, to be instructed as became the heir of a family, one of whose chiefs had given it as his opinion that "a king without learning was a crowned ass."

I ought to mention that Walter Burley had been bred at Merton College, Oxford, and that he was a celebrated doctor of divinity. Having written divers treatises on natural and moral philosophy, his fame spread over the country, and recommended him to the Court; and when Philippa of Hainault came to England as queen, he had the distinction of being appointed her almoner; and, in

after years, when he had the honour of figuring as tutor to her son, he fulfilled his functions with high credit. At the same time, Simon Burley, his young kinsman, a lad of great promise, was admitted as one of the prince's class-fellows, and formed that friendship which subsequently led to his being the prince's favourite knight.

Nor were those exercises which make men strong in battle neglected in the education of the prince. From childhood he was accustomed to arms, trained to feats of chivalry, and inured to exertion. As he grew up he gave indications not to be mistaken of turning out a learned, elegant, and brilliant hero, and, in some respects, reminded men of his mighty progenitor who conquered Simon de Montfort at Evesham, and reigned as the first Edward with so much power and popularity.

Meanwhile, the royal boy was admitted to the honours which naturally devolved on him as heir to the crown of England. At the age of three he was created Earl of Chester; at seven he was made Duke of Cornwall; and at thirteen he was, in parliament, invested by the king with the dignity of Prince of Wales.

About the same period, another honour, and one to which he had no hereditary claim, seemed likely to fall to his lot. I have already mentioned that the Count of Flanders had, by his tyranny, driven his subjects to revolt, and that Jacob von Arteveldt, a famous brewer, exercised enormous influence among his countrymen, and that, especially in Ghent, his word was almost law.

Now it entered into the heart of Arteveldt to conceive the expediency of wholly depriving the Count of Flanders of his inheritance, of making it a duchy, and bestowing it on the Prince of Wales. Full of his scheme, and perhaps rather elated with the power he enjoyed in Flanders, Arteveldt entered into communication with the King of England, and had the gratification of finding that his proposal was quite the reverse of unwelcome. Indeed, King Edward promised, without delay, to take his son to Flanders, that Arteveldt might have an opportunity of putting his project into execution; and, accordingly, about St. John the Baptist's Day, he embarked with the prince, in his ship, the Katherine, for Flanders,

and sailed into the harbour of Sluys, where, some years earlier, he had destroyed the French fleet.

At Sluys, King Edward kept his court on board his ship, the Katherine, and there received Arteveldt and his other allies among the Flemings. Many conferences were held. But it soon appeared that Arteveldt's enthusiasm was not shared by his countrymen. The idea of disinheriting their count and his son was one which they seemed most averse to entertain; and they could not be prevailed on to do more in the matter than promise to consult the cities which they represented. Every attempt to bring the business to a conclusion proved abortive; and meanwhile a storm was gathering which was to destroy the whole scheme at a blow.

In fact, French influences, and perhaps French gold, were at work in every city of Flanders, and rapidly undermining the power which Arteveldt had for years been building up. All regard for freedom and commerce gave way before the prejudices of the hour; and the people of Ghent not only set their faces decidedly against Arteveldt's project of deposing their count in favour of the Prince of Wales, but manifested the utmost indignation against its author. In Arteveldt's absence from Ghent the murmurs were loud; and no sooner did he return to the town than the malcontents expressed their sentiments in a most menacing tone.

It was about the noon of a summer's day when Arteveldt, having left the King of England and the Prince of Wales at Sluys, entered Ghent. Immediately he became aware that his popularity was gone. People who, in other days, had been wont to salute him with profound respect, now bent their brows and turned their backs; and the multitude, at all times easily deluded, intimated that they were prepared to restore the count whom they had banished, and to throw down the great citizen whom they, till recently, had worshipped.

"Here," cried they, as they recognised his figure on horseback, "comes one who is too much the master, and wants to order in Flanders according to his will and pleasure. This must not be longer borne."

Arteveldt was not blind nor deaf to what was passing.

As he rode up the street he became certain that some mischief was in agitation, and probably suspected that his life was aimed at. In any case, he hastened to take precautions against any attempt at violence. As soon as he dismounted and entered his mansion, he ordered the doors and windows to be secured, and warned his servants to be on their guard.

It soon appeared that Arteveldt's instincts had not deceived him. In fact, a multitude, chiefly composed of the mechanical class, almost instantaneously filled the street, surrounded the mansion, and evinced a determination to go all lengths and force an entrance. Resistance appearing vain, Arteveldt despaired of saving himself by force; and, coming to a window with his head uncovered, he attempted to bring them to reason.

"My good people," said he, in the most soothing tone, "what aileth you? Why are you so enraged against me? How have I incurred your displeasure? Tell me, and I will conform myself entirely to your wills."

"We want," answered they with one voice, "an account of the treasures you have made away with."

"Gentlemen," said Arteveldt, "be assured that I have never taken anything from the treasures of Flanders; and if you will, for the present, return quietly to your homes, and come here to-morrow morning, I will be ready to give so good an account of them that you shall have every reason to be satisfied."

"No, no!" cried they; "we must have it directly. You shall not escape us thus. We know that you have emptied the treasury, and, without our knowledge, sent the money to England; and you must, therefore, suffer death."

When Arteveldt heard this, he clasped his hands together, and wept in mortification of spirit as he thought of the services he had rendered his country, and perceived how they were likely to be requited.

"Gentlemen," he said, "such as I am, you yourselves have made me. Formerly you swore you would protect me against all the world, and now, without any reason, you want to murder me."

"Come down," bawled the mob, "and do not preach

to us from such a height. We want to know what you have done with the treasures of Flanders?"

Seeing clearly that the populace were in that state of excitement which makes them mistake friends for foes, and that his destruction was certainly intended, Arteveldt left the window and attempted to get out of his house by the rear, with the object of taking refuge in a neighbouring church. But he was too late to save himself from butchery. Already four hundred men had entered the mansion by the back, and the toils were upon him. Shouting for his head, and clamouring like wild beasts, they rushed upon him, seized him forcibly, trampled him under foot, and slew him without mercy.

When this tragical event occurred at Ghent, the King of England and the Prince of Wales were still at Sluys, awaiting the result of their negotiations. On hearing of Arteveldt's violent death, the king was enraged beyond measure; and, after vowing to avenge his ally and friend, he put to sea with his son and returned to England.

Extreme was the alarm of the more prudent among the Flemings when they learned what had been done by the mob at Ghent, and what had been said by the King of England on receiving intelligence of the murder of Arteveldt. Without delay they sent ambassadors from the various cities to explain and apologise; and at Westminster the Flemings were admitted to the royal presence. At first, Edward was haughty and disdainful; but, after much conversation with the ambassadors, who disowned all participation in the bloody deed, he consented to forego thoughts of vengeance.

By this time, indeed, the king had foes enough on the Continent without adding the Flemings to the number; and he perceived the impolicy of attempting to force his son on them as a ruler. It was not as Duke of Flanders, but as Prince of Wales, that the heir of England was to perform the martial prodigies which made him so famous among the men of the age he adorned with his valour and chivalry.

Events had already reached a crisis which rendered the continuation of peace impossible, when I so far realised the aspirations I had cherished in obscurity as to make

my way into the service of the young hero around whose name so much fame was soon to gather.

CHAPTER IX

KING EDWARD'S DEFIANCE

As King Edward had promised, I speedily found myself installed as one of the pages to the Prince of Wales, and hastened to provide myself with garments suitable to my new position in life, and to fall into the ways of the court over which the good Queen Philippa presided with so much grace and amiability.

In spite of the humble sphere from which I had emerged, I was treated with almost familiar kindness by the prince, and with perfect courtesy by the gentlemen who formed his household, with the single exception of the Lord De Ov, whose haughty words at Smithfield had so deeply galled me. Between the young baron and myself there existed an instinctive antipathy, as if we had been born to be mortal foes; and, as he never looked at me without a scowl of scorn, I, rather elate with my rising fortunes, replied with glances of fiery defiance.

I had lost no time in sending a messenger from Windsor to inform my grandsire and my mother of the result of my visit to Jack Fletcher, and of my intention to take an early opportunity of presenting myself in person at the home-stead, to convince them not only that there was no mistake about my good luck, but also that I was certain, ere long, to rise higher.

Never, indeed, had there been a time when an Englishman was likely to have more chances of distinguishing himself in continental war. Everybody was telling his neighbour how the king was about to lead an army, composed of Englishmen, to France, and how Philip of Valois—if he knew what manner of men the invaders were likely to be—would tremble at the prospect of their landing. I fully participated in the prevailing excitement, and listened eagerly as Simon Burley related the circumstances under which King Edward sent the defiance which made a renewal of the war inevitable.

It appears that the King of England was at Windsor, celebrating the feast of St. George, and flattering himself that peace was established, when he received intelligence that the treaty of Malestroit had been rudely broken by the summary execution of his Breton allies. The king, whose temper was fiery, no sooner heard of this breach of faith and outrage on justice, than his blood boiled with indignation, and he vowed he would make Philip of Valois repent his handiwork.

At that time Sir Hervé de Léon, a knight of Brittany, who had stood sternly up for the interest of Charles of Blois against the English king and the Earl of Montfort, happened to be a prisoner in England; and Edward in the excess of his rage, bethought him of retaliation. Fortunately, however, Henry, Earl of Derby, the king's kinsman, had the courage to remonstrate, and to persuade Edward that such a course would be unworthy of his dignity and of the reputation he enjoyed throughout Christendom.

"My lord," said Derby, "if Philip of Valois has, in his rashness, had the villainy to put to death so many valiant knights, do not suffer your courage to be tainted by it; for, in truth, if you will but consider a little, your prisoner has nothing to do with this outrage. Have the goodness therefore to give him his liberty at a reasonable ransom."

Edward, after attentively listening to the earl, paused, reflected, indicated by gesture his concurrence in his kinsman's opinion, and ordered the captive knight to be brought to his presence.

"Ha! Sir Hervé—Sir Hervé," began the king, who by this time had recovered his serenity, "my adversary, Philip of Valois, has shown his treachery in too cruel a manner when he put to death so many knights. It has given me much displeasure, and it appears as if it were done in despite of us. If I were to take his conduct as my example, I ought to do the like to you, for you have done me more harm in Brittany than any other man."

"Sire——" said Sir Hervé, interrupting.

"Nay," continued Edward, "listen. I will preserve my honour unspotted, and allow you your liberty at a trifling ransom, out of my love for the Earl of Derby, who has

requested it; but on this condition, that you perform what I am going to ask of you."

"Sire," said Sir Hervé, "I will do the best of my power to perform whatever you shall command."

"Ah, then, let us come to the point," continued the king. "I know, Sir Hervé, that you are one of the richest knights in Brittany, and if I were to press you, you would pay me forty thousand crowns for your ransom. But you will go to Philip of Valois, my adversary, and tell him, from me, that, by putting so many knights to death in so dishonourable a manner, he has sore displeased me, and I say and maintain that he has, by this act, broken the truce, and that, from this moment, I consider it broken, and by you send him my defiance."

"Sire," replied Sir Hervé, "I will perform your message to the best of my abilities."

"In consideration of your carrying my message," added the king, "I will let you off for ten thousand crowns, which you will send to Bruges within five days after you have crossed the seas."

"Sire," said the knight, "I engage so to do; and God reward you and my lord of Derby for your kindness to me."

No delay could be laid to the charge of Sir Hervé de Léon in fulfilling his promise. Finding himself released from prison, he took leave of the king, and embarked at Southampton. His intention was to land at Harfleur, but the vessel in which he sailed encountered a violent storm. For fifteen days the knight was almost at the mercy of the winds and the waves; and he was under the necessity of throwing his horses overboard. At length the mariners landed at Crotoy, a town in Picardy, at the mouth of the Somme, and Sir Hervé with his suite journeyed on foot to Abbeville.

The voyage, however, had proved too much for the Breton knight, and at Abbeville he was so ill and so weakened by sea-sickness that he could not ride on horseback. But he did not forget his promise; and, though his end was approaching, he travelled in a litter to Paris, and delivered to Philip of Valois, word for word, the message with which King Edward had intrusted him.

"And now," said King Edward, "let my adversary tremble."

"Ay, let Philip of Valois tremble," shouted hundreds of voices.

Everywhere throughout England there was bustle, and excitement, and preparation for war; and while men-at-arms and archers were mustering at Southampton, Godfrey de Harcourt, that great noble of Normandy, whom Philip of Valois menaced with death, reached England, to encourage the king with his promises and aid him with his counsels; and among the youth who surrounded the Prince of Wales there was much enthusiasm, and also much talk of performing feats of arms; and none among them was more enthusiastic than myself or more hopeful of doing something to win renown.

It was under such circumstances, one morning in May, that I rode through Windsor Forest to the homestead that had sheltered my childhood, to bid adieu to my grandsire and to my mother before crossing the sea. My grandsire shed a tear and my mother wept bitterly as we parted. But my heart was too elate with hope, and my brain too full of glowing aspirations, to allow their sadness to depress me. Already I was, in imagination, winning the spurs of knighthood, even leading armies to victory, and making my way to fame and fortune by heroic achievements.

So far everything appeared brilliant. But I was destined, ere the year closed, to discover that war was not wholly made up of triumphs, and to have ample leisure to pine, in irksome solitude, for a sight of the quiet homestead which I had deemed so dull.

But let me not tell of the future. At the period of which I write there was little thought among us of disaster or of mishaps. The king, the prince, earls, barons, knights, squires, and yeomen were leaving their homes to take part in the great enterprise. All England was ringing with predictions of victory and conquest: and my young heart beat to the music of the hour, as I thought of Philip of Valois listening to the terms of King Edward's defiance, and trembling on his throne at the approach of King Edward's vengeance.

CHAPTER X

THE VOYAGE

ABOUT St. John the Baptist's Day, 1346, the King of England, having nominated his young son, Lionel of Clarence, lieutenant of the realm, and intrusted Queen Philippa to his kinsman, the Earl of Kent, embarked at Southampton, to cross the sea. On board the king's ship, the Katherine, was the Prince of Wales; and I, with other pages and several young gentlemen of high birth, had the privilege of being in attendance on the prince.

Godfrey de Harcourt, the great Norman lord I have already mentioned, accompanied King Edward on this occasion. Indeed, the king relied much upon Harcourt for such information as might enable him to penetrate into the country which recognised Philip of Valois as sovereign, and strike a shattering blow at his adversary's power.

It was King Edward's intention to land in Gascony; and his mighty armament, on board of which were most of the great earls and barons of England, put to sea with that view. The wind was favourable, and, as the ships went tilting over the waves, it was a fair sight to behold; for it seemed as if the whole water, as far as the eye could reach, was covered with cloth, from the number of sails that were given to the wind. On the third day, however, there was a marvellous change. In fact, the wind, changing suddenly, drove us on the coast of Cornwall; and the mariners were fain to cast anchor, and remain there for six days and six nights.

It was now that Harcourt proposed to King Edward to change the destination of the armament, and to land in Normandy instead of Gascony.

"Sire," said Harcourt, "Normandy is one of the most fertile provinces in the world; and I will answer with my head that you may land in any part of it you please without hindrance, for no one will think of opposing you. You will find in Normandy rich towns and handsome castles without any means of defence, and your people

will gain wealth enough to suffice them for twenty years to come. Your fleet may also follow you up the river Orne, as far as Caen."

"On my faith, cousin," said the king, "I believe you are in the right."

"What I state is true, sire," added Harcourt; "I, therefore, intreat you will listen, and give credit to what I have said."

After some consideration, King Edward determined on following Harcourt's sage advice; and, without delay, he gave orders that the fleet should steer direct for Normandy. At the same time, he ordered the flag of the Earl of Warwick, who was admiral, to be hoisted on board his own ship; and, the wind being favourable, he took the lead of the armament, and made straight for the Norman shore.

It was on the coast of Coutantin, of which Coutances is the chief town, that the English fleet came to anchor; and it was at the port of La Hogue, not far from St. Sauveur le Vicomte, the dominion of Harcourt, that King Edward landed.

At that moment, as I well remember, there occurred a slight accident, which created much excitement, and which the king, with admirable presence of mind, turned to good account. Being impatient to reach the land which he claimed as his own, he no sooner observed that the Katherine was on the point of touching the strand, than he leaped from on board. As he set foot on the shore, however, he happened to slip, and fell with such force on his face, that the blood gushed from his nose.

A cry of horror instantly arose, and spread through the armament; and the knights about the king gathered round him with dismay on their countenances.

"Sire," said they, "let us intreat you to return to your ship, and not think of landing to-day, for this is an unlucky omen."

"Why an unlucky omen?" exclaimed the king, after a moment's hesitation. "I look upon it as most favourable, for it is a sign that the land is desirous of me."

As the king's words were reported, a loud shout indicated how much pleased the English were with his answer; and they began to disembark with the baggage,

armour, and horses. That night the king and his army lay on the sands ; and, next day, having conferred knighthood on the Prince of Wales, and appointed Godfrey de Harcourt and the Earl of Warwick marshals of his army, and the Earl of Arundel constable, he prepared to march.

Meanwhile messengers, despatched by the towns of Normandy, were riding in haste towards Paris, to inform Philip of Valois that the English had landed ; and all over the country rumour spread the news that the lion-hearted Plantagenet was once more on the soil of France, with a mighty host of archers and men-at-arms, led by Anglo-Norman nobles, whose genius and valour made them most formidable war-chiefs.

And so, no longer, as on former occasions, with a band of foreign hirelings, but with an army of Englishmen, sworn to conquer or die, and with his gallant son riding by his side, did King Edward begin his march into the dominions of his adversary—hope beckoning him onwards and genius guiding him on the way to victory.

I have said that I embarked to take part in the war in high spirits ; and in spite of the exertion and fatigue of the disembarking, my enthusiasm had now risen to the highest pitch. But suddenly I was reminded that I had, at least, one enemy at hand, who was determined not to overlook my existence. I was just mounting my black steed to ride in the prince's train, and had my hand in the mane to vault into the saddle, when the Lord De Ov crossed my path, and contrived, in passing, to run his charger against mine in such a way as to leave no doubt that insult was intended ; and then, turning round, he eyed me with a malevolence that no words could have expressed.

My blood naturally boiled at this unprovoked insult, and at another time I should certainly have given way to my temper. In the prince's presence, however, and in the circumstances in which I was, anything like retaliation was out of the question, and I was forced to restrain my wrath and bite my glove.

Mounting in sullen mood, I calmed myself as I best could ; and, as I followed the prince's banner, I could not help wondering for the twentieth time, but more than ever, what cause there could be for the malevolence which this

young baron, so high in the world's esteem in comparison, exhibited towards me, an unprotected boy, from the day when accident threw us in each other's way.

I lived long enough both to experience his utmost malice, and to punish it. Better far for him would it have been to have allowed the past to sink into oblivion. It was his constant display of antipathy which eventually led to my penetrating the mystery that hung over my birth, and to discover that I had to settle with my Lord De Ov a heavy hereditary account; and it was his own insolent folly that precipitated the fate that befell him on that day when, in the face of heaven and earth, I avenged, at one blow, the wrongs of a father, and my own.

CHAPTER XI

MARCH OF THE INVADERS

IT soon appeared that the alarm expressed by the French when they heard that the King of England had set his armed heel on the soil of Normandy was not unfounded or unreasonable.

Indeed, the martial chief of the English invaders lost no time in making his presence felt, and adding to the terror which the news of his landing had inspired. After dividing his forces into three divisions, he advanced into the country, the centre host being under his own command and that of the Prince of Wales; while on either hand marched the marshals, ravaging as they went, and driving the natives before them as hunters chase the deer. Every evening, at sunset, the three forces met at the place appointed for encamping for the night; and every morning they parted to pursue their successes.

First among the places that yielded to the English was St. Lo, a rich trading town in Coutantin; and, this conquest achieved, they advanced on Caen, a flourishing and handsome city, with a noble castle and many fine churches, besides the monastery dedicated to St. Stephen, in which reposed the ashes of William the Norman. At Caen, Edward became aware that there was every prospect of resistance, for Robert de Blarguy, with three

hundred Genoese, held the castle; while the Count of Tancarville and the Count of Eu, Constable of France, occupied the town with a host of warriors, who, when joined by the townsmen, formed a formidable force.

It was necessary, under the circumstances, to proceed with caution; and the king quartered for the night in the fields outside the town, with the intention of attacking on the morrow. But the French were meanwhile on the alert; and, headed by the constable, the citizens boldly came forth into the field to do battle with the invaders. Nor did the English shrink from an encounter. No sooner, indeed, did day dawn, than the king and the Prince of Wales prepared for action, and set their men in order. The sight of the English produced an immediate effect; and when they began to approach, the townsmen took fright, turned their backs, and fled through the gates.

But it was too late to save themselves by flight; and the English, entering with them, forcibly took possession. This, however, was not done without considerable loss. Indeed, the men of Caen showered stones and every description of missile from the windows, and exerted themselves so vigorously that more than five hundred Englishmen lost their lives.

On hearing of the havoc that had been wrought among his soldiers, King Edward was highly exasperated; and, in his wrath, he thought of vengeance.

"On my faith," exclaimed he, "I am strongly inclined to put the inhabitants to the sword, and burn the town!"

Harcourt, however, interposed, and appeased the king's wrath.

"Sire," said he, "assuage somewhat of your anger, and be satisfied with what has already been done. You have a long journey to make, and there are in this town thousands of men who will defend themselves obstinately. It would cost you many lives, and put a stop to your expedition, without redounding to your honour. Philip de Valois is certain to come to give you battle, and you will have more than full employment for all your men."

"Sir Godfrey," replied the king, "you are marshal; therefore order as you please. For this time we will not interfere."

Delighted at the king's answer, Harcourt mounted his horse, ordered his banner to be displayed, rode through the town, and commanded that none of the English should, on pain of death, hurt any man or woman in Caen. This prevented slaughter; but many prisoners were taken, and the Constable of France and the Count of Tancarville were among the number.

At Caen the king and his army remained for three days; and the English, having made themselves masters of the place, did not fail to make free with what it contained. After the marshal's proclamation, which assured the inhabitants that their lives were safe, was understood, all fear on their part seemed to vanish. Many of them received the invaders into their houses as guests, and others freely opened their coffers, and parted with their gold in consideration of being protected.

Finding themselves masters, on such terms, of a town larger than any in England, except London, full of noble dames, and damsels, and rich citizens, and stocked with draperies, merchandise, wines, and all manner of good things, the English indulged, without stint, their appetite for pleasure and plunder; and many of them amassed great wealth, which was sent, in barges, down the river to Estreham, to be conveyed to St. Sauveur, where lay the fleet, ready to convey the spoil and the prisoners to England.

CHAPTER XII

A SNARE

It is not unnatural that, when relating what the king said, and what his marshals did, and how his army moved, I should be in some danger of losing sight of my own figure, and even forgetting, in some degree, my own existence. However, I would not, by any means, have the reader conclude that, because silent as to my achievements, I, Arthur Winram, was wholly idle during the march of the English from La Hogue to Caen, or an idle spectator of the events that rendered that expedition memorable.

In fact, young, new to life, ardent and eager to appear a man, I entered with enthusiasm into the spirit of the

enterprise. Far be it from me to sing my own praises; but, being in constant activity, I met with exploits of which I venture to say no warrior of my age could with justice boast. At Caen I was among the first who entered the gates, and barely escaped atoning for my audacity by being stoned to death in the narrow streets; and afterwards gained some experience, and a significant warning to be on my guard, during a mysterious adventure, which involved me in such danger that I well-nigh gave myself up for lost.

I have already mentioned that, after the king had consented to spare the place, Godfrey de Harcourt rode through the streets with his banner displayed, and commanded that no Englishman should, on pain of death, injure an inhabitant, male or female, and that the proclamation led to the army mingling with the citizens. I was rather too young to profit much by the hospitality or the wealth of the men and women of Caen; but I was not insensible to the wild kind of freedom in which the invaders indulged, and did not fail, like my neighbours, to assume the air of a conqueror, and to roam about the city as if I had been lord of all I beheld.

It happened that, on the second day of the king's residence in Caen, I was examining, not without interest, the monastery of St. Stephen, in which repose the ashes of William the Norman, when I felt my shoulder slightly touched, and, turning quickly round, found beside me a man with a beetle brow, who, in answer to my question as to his business with me, intimated that he could not speak my language, but placed a missive in my hand.

Drawing back to guard against surprise—for his appearance was the reverse of prepossessing—I read the document with breathless amazement.

“If the English page, calling himself Arthur Winram”—so ran the words—“will, at nightfall, meet the bearer of this on the spot on which he receives it, he will be conducted to the presence of one who will clear away the mystery that hangs over his birth, and reveal the story of his parentage.”

I trembled with excitement as these words met my eye, and did not, for an instant, hesitate about venturing on

an interview. Having explained to the messenger, in as good French as I was master of, that I should meet him at the time appointed, I hurried back to the prince's quarters, and passed the remainder of the day in vague surmises. I confess that sometimes I suspected a snare ; but, considering my position, believing that no one could be interested in harming me, I dismissed my doubts as they rose, and asked, with a smile of contempt, whether, in pursuit of the information for which, from childhood, I had earnestly longed, I, vowed as I was to face all dangers in quest of fame and fortune, would shrink from a hazard which could not be great, and which probably was imaginary.

Such being the view which I took of the adventure to which I was invited, I awaited in a restless mood the hour for going forth to hear the secret by which, I could not doubt, my destiny, in some measure, hung. At length, the sun having set, I prepared to be gone ; and arraying myself, without any weapon save a small dagger, which, having sheathed, I placed in my bosom to be ready to my hand in case of need, I walked forth with the feelings natural to a man about to solve a mysterious question that has for years baffled his intelligence, and preyed on his imagination.

Making my way through streets filled with warriors flushed with wine, I bent my steps to the monastery of St. Stephen, and there I found, true to his time and appointment, the man with the beetle brow. Without speaking, he made a sign for me to follow ; and I, having by this time cast the last remnant of hesitation to the winds, accepted his guidance, and walked on, under the influence of a curiosity which silenced the last whispers of prudence.

It was still early, but daylight had wholly departed ; and, the moon not having yet risen, Caen was gradually enveloped in darkness, as my guide, after leading me through streets with which I was unacquainted, at length halted before the door of a house which had nothing to distinguish it from the ordinary dwellings of citizens in that town and others of the province of which it formed part. Having rung at the gate, we were readily admitted ; and I, after being conducted up a stair, found myself in

an apartment somewhat brilliantly lighted, and, as I thought, richly furnished. On a table, where stood a lamp that threw its brilliancy all over the room, were a flask and two drinking-cups; and on a couch, hard by, reclined a woman who rose as I entered, and welcomed me with a smile, which, of itself, would have sufficed to banish suspicion of anything like foul play being intended.

At this moment, when long years have intervened, I perfectly remember the impression which the first sight of that woman produced on me.

She was young—not more than twenty—and exquisitely beautiful, with a tall, graceful figure, hair dark as the raven's wing, dark, dark eyes, that seemed to pierce instantly to the heart, and features which, in later years, would have led me to suppose her a native of Italy. At that time, however, I was much too ignorant of countries and races to be capable of making any such distinctions; and as I stood silent, I certainly was not stupified, but I was lost in wonder.

“You know not the language of the country in which we are?” said she, with a voice and manner which completed the fascination.

“It grieves me, lady,” I replied, “that I am not so familiar with it as to hold converse freely with the natives; but I know enough to understand and to make myself understood.”

“It matters not,” she said hastily; “for I know enough of the English tongue to spare you the inconvenience of speaking, or listening to, mine. Your name, or rather the name by which men call you, is Arthur Winram?”

“True,” answered I, “I pass by that name; but I have reason to believe that I am entitled to bear one to which the world would pay more respect.”

“On that point you shall be enlightened anon,” said she, as she motioned me to a seat, and then added, gravely and in a tone of emotion, “but the tale I have to tell is one of bloodshed; and you will require all your courage to hear it to an end. Be pleased, therefore, to steel your heart for the trial.”

As she spoke she raised the flask on the table, filled the cups that stood with it, took one herself, and made a sign

for me to take the other. I obeyed ; I put forth my hand ; I took the cup ; I raised it to my lips ; and, as my blood was feverish with suspense, and my thirst, in consequence, intense, I drank copiously. I had scarcely done so when a marvellous change came over me. My head began to swim ; the objects in the room seemed to dance before my face. Gradually my eyes grew dim ; the figure of the woman faded from my sight ; and I sank back overcome and unconscious.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BROKEN BRIDGES

AFTER remaining three days in Caen, and despatching the Earl of Huntingdon to England in command of that fleet which carried not only the spoil of the Norman towns but a multitude of prisoners, among whom were some sixty knights, including the Count of Tancarville and the Count of Eu, Constable of France, King Edward led forth his army to pursue his career of conquest.

It soon appeared that the great Plantagenet would have to encounter a difficulty which, perhaps, he had little anticipated. At first, indeed, the progress of the English was as easy and as uninterrupted as before their arrival at Caen. Having taken the town of Louviers, and made themselves masters of much of the wealth the place contained, they marched into the county of Evreux ; and Edward, with a view of drawing near to Rouen, where he hoped to attract many Norman men-at-arms to his standard, approached the banks of the Seine. But at this stage he found his operations unexpectedly checked. In fact, the French, acting under orders from Philip de Valois, whose alarm and rage knew no bounds, had deliberately and carefully broken down the bridges to prevent Edward crossing to the right bank ; and it was not till he reached Poissy, in the Isle of France, not more than seven leagues from Paris, that he could see any way of overcoming the difficulty which his adversary had thrown in his way.

The bridge of Poissy, like the others on the Seine, had been destroyed by the French ; but the beams and other parts were left by the river, and the king resolved on its

reconstruction. Accordingly, he took up his residence for a few days in the convent of Poissy; and while his marshals pursued their ravages almost to the gates of Paris, burning St. Germain and St. Cloud by the way, he celebrated the feast of the Virgin Mary, sitting at table in scarlet robes, without sleeves, trimmed with furs and ermines.

The festival of St. Mary over, the marshals having returned, and the bridge having been repaired, Edward again donned his mail, passed the Seine on the 15th of August, and turned his face toward Calais, which it was his object to reach. But after taking the town and castle of Poix the king found himself in a still more awkward dilemma than that from which he had freed himself; for the Somme, a broad and deep river, presented an apparently insuperable obstacle to his progress; and he pushed forward to Airaines, a town four leagues from Amiens, with the melancholy conviction that his own situation and that of his army was critical in the extreme.

Every bridge on the Somme had been broken down, and not a jot of information as to a ford could be obtained for love or money. Before Edward was the river, apparently impassable; behind him a mighty army bent on his destruction; for Philip of Valois had taken the field, and around his banner had gathered half the feudal warriors of Europe. From Bohemia, from Germany, from Luxembourg, from Hainault, from Savoy, and from Lorraine, they had rushed under kings and princes of fame, and were coming on the track of the English like hunters pressing on to the lion's death. It was vain to think of a refuge, for the invaders were in a hostile country, with no place of sufficient strength to afford a chance of security. But the king's heart did not fail him even in that day of trial.

"Here," said he, on reaching Airaines, "we halt for three days; during that time we must find or make a way to pass the Somme; and once on the other side we will, please God and St. George, show our adversaries how, when closely pressed, the lion can turn to bay."

But three days passed, and, in spite of all the efforts of the marshals, matters remained as they had been, save

that the enemy drew rapidly nearer, and the English army seemed doomed; and many muttered, "All is lost."

CHAPTER XIV

A RUSH FOR LIBERTY

I MUST now leave the King of England and his army at Airaines, retrace my steps to Caen, and relate what befell me in that city when I so unexpectedly, and under such mysterious circumstances, sank in unconsciousness.

It is not in my power to say how long I remained insensible of the position in which I was. I awoke, however, with a feeling of sickliness, which was speedily succeeded by one of horror. It was pitch dark; my limbs felt cramped and confined; and when I strove to recover my feeling of freedom, I discovered, to my consternation, that I was bound hand and foot. I almost lost my senses on making this discovery; but, fortunately, drowsiness crept over me, and I again yielded to slumber. It was well that such was the case, as it probably saved me from despair and delirium.

When I again awoke it was broad daylight, and I was better able to judge of my predicament. I immediately perceived that I was reclining on straw in a small chamber, lighted by a window that was high from the floor, and that there was no appearance of any door by which an escape might be attempted. Nor was this all. My hands and feet were firmly bound with cords. I was evidently a prisoner, and perhaps destined for a victim.

My reflections at that moment, as may be supposed, were not of the most agreeable kind; and I thought with a deep sigh, of my grandsire's grange, and, almost with remorse, of my mother's warning. Not unnaturally I cursed the fortune which, after deluding my fancy with promises of a golden future, reduced me suddenly to the condition of a captive, without even leaving me the power of striking a blow for my deliverance.

As I reflected and murmured, I was interrupted by the voices of persons who seemed to converse in a low tone, and presently a concealed door was opened, and the man

with the beetle brow entered the chamber. I closed my eyes, breathed hard, and pretended to be sunk in slumber. But I was all attention, and felt a return of hope.

"He sleeps," said the man, looking towards the door.

"Good," exclaimed his companion; "and the sooner he sleeps the sleep that knows no breaking so much the better."

"My lord," said the man resolutely, "I have told you I will not have his blood on my hands."

"What need?" was the reply; "if he is left here long enough, time and hunger will do their work."

I shuddered at the idea, but without attracting their notice; and as they turned to depart, I partially opened my eyes. My suspicions as to the author of my incarceration were instantly confirmed as I caught a glance of the person who destined me for the most cruel of deaths. But I felt calmly vindictive, and, almost ere the bolts were turned upon me, had resolved to keep my own counsel, and to await with patience the day of vengeance.

Matters having reached this stage, I bent all my ingenuity to discover some possibility of setting myself free, and determined to exercise no particular scruples as to the means. Fortunately, my dagger had been left where I had placed it on the previous evening, and I contrived, by great exertion, to bring the handle near my mouth, with the object of seizing it in my teeth, and drawing it from the sheath. After several trials I succeeded, and commenced to saw the cords with which my hands were bound, but for a long time found my efforts quite futile. I must have passed hours making effort after effort in vain, and was on the point of abandoning the attempt in despair, when I was inspired with renewed energy by a circumstance that attracted my attention as I lay on my back, toiling diligently, but to no purpose.

While occupied, as I have stated, and ever and anon pausing to ponder on the necessity of yielding to fate, my eye caught sight of a spider, which while spinning its web, had suspended itself by a long and slender thread from the roof above my head, and, with great perseverance, endeavoured to swing itself from one rafter to another. I watched its efforts, and became interested in the uncon-

querable determination it displayed. Repeated defeats only led to renewed energy. Six times it had essayed to reach its point, and on each occasion it failed and fell back. Admiring the insect's determination, and drawing a parallel between myself and it, I resolved to regulate my conduct by its ultimate success or failure. As I did so it made a seventh effort, attained its object, and fixed its web; and, encouraged by the augury, I renewed mine with such vigour that I soon succeeded. I almost went mad with joy and excitement as I found my hands free; I lost not a moment in cutting the cords that bound my feet; and I stood upright on the floor, somewhat cramped, indeed, but with my dagger in my grasp, and on my face a stern smile, as I stretched out my limbs, and felt that I had energy enough left to strike a desperate blow for liberty and life.

It was necessary, however, to act with caution, and carefully to examine my position; and I did so. I found that the window, besides being high from the floor, was too well secured with iron to admit of my escaping by it; and, moreover, I strongly suspected that the chamber in which I found myself was at so great a height from the ground, that, even if I could have forced myself through it, I should have been unable to descend, save with something like a certainty of breaking my neck. Accordingly, I at once abandoned that idea, and concluded that, as I could not hope to escape by stratagem, I must lose no time in attempting to do so by force.

But, in order to attempt force with any prospect of accomplishing my object, I felt that it was necessary to await my opportunity; and I recalled to mind the proverb of the Arabs as to patience being the price of all success. In this frame of mind—calm, but perfectly resolute—I took my place by the door, and prepared, as soon as it was opened, to close with my gaoler, to force my way downward, dagger in hand, and take my chance—no matter what odds I might encounter—of making my way to the street, and thence to the prince's quarters.

For hours I had to wait and wearily passed the time. At length, however, when the day was departing, and I knew by the decreasing light that evening had fallen, I

suddenly heard steps. I drew slightly aside, and rejoiced to think that the dusk befriended me. As I drew aside, the bolt turned, the door opened, and the man with the beetle brow entered with something—perhaps food—in his hand. I had no time, however, to observe minutely. As he glanced towards the spot I had occupied, and perceived that I was no longer there, he uttered an exclamation of surprise. But already the prospect of escape had inspired me with extraordinary energy. Almost ere the exclamation had left his tongue, I sprang upon him as the mastiff on the bull, and, with a mighty exertion of strength, I prostrated him on the floor.

Not an instant did I now hesitate. I placed my dagger between my teeth, sprang through the open door, descended the narrow stairs almost at a bound, darted by the woman whom I had seen on the previous evening, and, to make matters short, pushed through a window that was before me, and managed so dexterously to drop to the ground, that, albeit the distance was considerable, I was shaken, indeed, but unhurt.

My escape had been effected with so much more ease than I anticipated, that I could hardly believe in its having really taken place. However, as I gathered myself up, I became convinced; and, after muttering thanks to God and the saints for their protection, I made my way through the dark to the prince's quarters. My first impulse, in spite of the vow I had formed, was to hasten to the prince and tell all. But I had been long enough at court to have learned to think twice before opening my mouth on such a subject; and five minutes' reflection enabled me to perceive that I should never be believed. I, therefore, renewed my resolution not to publish my wrongs till my name was great enough to give weight to my words, and, in the meantime, to watch my enemy closely.

As I reached the prince's quarters, I, somewhat to my dismay, ran against Sir Thomas Norwich, a warrior who had won renown under the Earl of Derby in Gascony. As this knight now held a high post in the prince's service, and occupied a high place in the king's favour, he was looked upon by squires and pages as a personage

whose good opinion was more to be desired than fine gold.

"Boy," said he, "where, in the name of all the saints, have you been?"

Unprepared for the question, I remained silent, and, doubtless, looked very guilty.

"Come," continued he severely; "I fear me that, young as you are, you have been following the multitude to do evil; and let me warn you that it is a game which ever, in the end, brings those who play at it to grief."

"Nay, sir knight," protested I earnestly, "I was tempted into an adventure which——"

"An adventure!" repeated Sir Thomas, shaking his head sternly. "Beware, boy. In the days of my youth I had many an adventure, and credit me, nothing can be more true than that the end of that mirth is sadness."

"Let me explain."

"Nay, nay. Enough of this. The king marches at sunrise; and see that you are in readiness to follow the prince's banner."

It was after my narrow escape, and not in the most celestial mood, that I accompanied the invading army, and took part in the various enterprises till we reached Airaines, and found that the Somme was between us and the province towards which we looked for safety.

CHAPTER XV

HUNTING A KING

IT is necessary, having conducted the English army, and myself, to Airaines, to go back for a few weeks to describe the effect which the march of the invaders produced on Philip of Valois, and to explain how he assembled a host so formidable as to daunt even King Edward's brave warriors.

No sooner did Philip learn how the English were ravaging Coutantin than he flew into one of his violent rages, and swore, in his wrath, that they should not escape punishment—that they should pay dearly for the mischief they were doing. Forthwith he summoned not

only his own barons and knights, but John of Hainault, and the fighting men of that country, and despatched messengers to John, the blind King of Bohemia, to Charles of Bohemia, John's son, who had been elected Emperor of Germany, to the Count of Flanders, to the Duke of Lorraine, to the Count of Savoy, and to the Count of Namur, to hasten to his aid with all their forces. Faithful to their ally in his distress and danger, they flocked to the capital of France like eagles to the carnage, and, encamping about St. Denis, awaited the approach of the invaders whom they had gathered to crush.

Meanwhile, Philip of Valois remained at Paris, expecting that King Edward would come thither to offer battle. However, when the marshals of England, marking their course by burning castles, pushed up to the very gates, and rumours ran that the English were about to pass the Seine, Philip began to stir; and, having ordered all the penthouses of Paris to be pulled down, he prepared to join the army which had assembled to fight for the crown which he unworthily wore.

When the Parisians, who, by this time, were in feverish alarm, learned that Philip was on the point of leaving the capital, their terror knew no bounds, and they raised a great outcry. In their distress they sent deputies to intreat him not to abandon them at such a crisis. On being admitted to his presence, the deputies fell on their knees.

"Ah, sire, and noble king," cried they, wringing their hands, "what are you about to do? Are you about to leave your fine city of Paris?"

"My good people," replied Philip, somewhat touched, "be not afraid."

"Sire," urged the deputies, "the English are but two leagues from Paris, and when they know you have quitted us they will advance, and we are unable to resist them. We pray you, therefore, to remain and defend us."

"Fear not," replied Philip; "I tell you the English will not approach nearer than they have done; and as for me, I must go to St. Denis, for I am impatient, above all things, to pursue the English, and to fight with them."

Accordingly, Philip of Valois that day left Paris, and, on reaching St. Denis, he found himself at the head of a noble army, with an emperor, a king, and a multitude of princes as his captains, and, what was deemed of immense importance, a numerous body of Genoese cross-bowmen, who, it was hoped, would prove more than a match for those English archers, whose achievements had made them the terror of their country's foes.

Much annoyed and rather startled was Philip to hear that King Edward had actually left Poissy, and crossed the Seine. However, having given orders to break down all the bridges on the Somme, and vigilantly to guard every spot at which it was possible to pass the river, he marched from St. Denis at the head of his army, which gradually swelled as he went to the number of a hundred thousand men, and pushed forward determinedly till he was within three leagues of Amiens. At this stage, Philip learned that Edward was at Airaines, and took up his quarters for the night at Amiens. Next day, however, he resumed the chase, and about noon appeared at Airaines. But, to his disappointment, he found that the English had left the place that morning, and that they had proceeded to Oisemont, a town in Picardy, five leagues from that which he had just quitted.

"Never mind," said Philip, haughtily, "Edward cannot escape us; we will shut him up between Abbeville and the Somme, and either take him prisoner, or force him to fight at such a disadvantage that he must lose."

Flattering himself with anticipations of a great triumph, Philip of Valois, before continuing the hunt after his royal foe, remained at Airaines to wait for his nobles and barons who were expected, while his scouts, who were all over the country in search of intelligence, brought tidings of the foe with whom he was so eager to come up; and he passed the night regaling his fancy with the idea of terminating the war, once and for ever, in his favour, at a blow, or perhaps without striking a blow. Next morning he rose from his couch to act on the information he had obtained.

It was now Thursday, the 24th of August; and Philip of Valois, mounting his steed, ordered his banner to be

displayed, and led his army forth from Airaines, confidently expecting to find the English king and his followers on the banks of the Somme, and either to take them captive, as a birdcatcher does sparrows, or to scatter them, as a hawk does pigeons. Suddenly, as he rode along in front of his array, one of the scouts met him with a face which indicated that he brought news not likely to be welcome.

“Well,” asked Philip, “where are these English? Speak, sirrah!”

“Sire,” answered the scout, “the English have passed the Somme.”

CHAPTER XVI

GOBIN AGACE

IN a former chapter I mentioned that, among the places taken by the King of England, during his victorious and exciting march through France, was Poix, a town of Picardy, about six leagues from Amiens. The Lord of Poix was absent; and the captain of his castle, not having the means of holding out, surrendered almost without resistance, and allowed the fortress to be entered by the English soldiers at a time when they were flushed with victory and wine.

It happened that, when the castle was taken, there were within its walls two demoiselles, daughters of the Lord of Poix, and very handsome. Great was the danger of these ladies at this moment; for the invaders, as I have said, were then highly excited with their triumphs, and in no humour to pay excessive respect to female virtue. Fortunately for the ladies of Poix, I had been one of the first to foot the walls of the castle and make my way into the interior; and, aware of the danger in which the demoiselles were placed, I posted myself before them, and, vowing to protect them, prepared, sword in hand, to defend their honour with my life. I confess, however, that I felt, to my consternation, that my influence in their behalf was not likely long to prevail under the circumstances.

“A murrain take the madcap page!” cried one man-at-arms, frowning on me fiercely.

“Make way,” shouted another, with a hoarse laugh, “and let me advance to console the fair ones in their jeopardy.”

“Only over my body,” answered I, as my blood boiled with indignation, and I brandished my sword.

“Down with the jackanapes!” exclaimed the first speaker, making a thrust at me with a spear.

I parried the attack, and my stubborn courage was not without its effect. Nevertheless, it was evident that my resistance could not long avail to save the noble demoiselles from insult, and I was just giving way to despair, when Sir John Chandos, a knight of great fame, made his appearance. Not without difficulty, he appeased the soldiers, and, having rescued the young ladies from their dangerous position, conducted them to the king. At his request I accompanied him to the royal presence, and Edward received them with chivalrous courtesy.

“We do not make war on women,” said the king; “and I am bound to protect you against all dangers. But, if there is any stronghold to which you wish to be conducted, name the place, and thither you shall be escorted without delay.”

“To Corbie,” was the reply.

“It shall be as you wish,” said Edward; and then turning to Sir Thomas Norwich, he added with a smile, “Sir Thomas, be yours the honour of escorting the noble demoiselles to the castle whither they wish to proceed.”

“Sire,” replied the knight, “I will, to the best of my ability, fulfil your command.”

I was, much to my satisfaction, ordered to accompany Sir Thomas Norwich on this expedition; and, finding myself acting as a protector of noble damsels of grace and beauty, began to consider myself a great hero of romance, and was, on our return, indulging in the luxury of building castles in the air, when we encountered a party of armed peasants. After a short skirmish we overcame, with little difficulty, the rustic militia, and took them in a body as captives to the English camp.

Now this led to important consequences. While running my eye over the prisoners, I remarked one stout fellow, whose countenance struck me as being more intelligent than that of his comrades; and, not without a vague hope of extracting from him such information as might be welcome to the prince, and of service to the king, I singled him out from the party, and entered into conversation.

“What is your name?” asked I.

“Gobin Agace,” was his answer.

“You are our prisoner,” observed I significantly.

“Yes,” said he; “but you may have heard the story of the mouse that gnawed the toils in which the lion was caught, and set the lion free.”

“And how does that concern the business now in hand?”

“Much,” answered the peasant; “for such a service as the mouse rendered to the lion, I can, I believe, render to your king.”

“Ha! by St. George, I perceive!” exclaimed I, much gratified. “Being a native of this country, you have such knowledge of the fords on the Somme as would secure you an ample reward.”

“In that respect,” said the young peasant, “I could render your king a service that would be worth my weight in gold; and, if you will lead me to his presence, I will convince you that I am not speaking as a braggart might.”

It was evening when we reached Oisemont, where King Edward was now quartered, and rode into the town with our captives. We were just in time. Immediately after, the king held a council; and, having ordered the prisoners to be brought before him that they might be questioned, he addressed them courteously.

“Good fellows,” said he, “do any of you know a ford on the Somme, below Abbeville, where I and my army could pass without danger? Whoever,” added Edward, “will show us such a ford shall have his own liberty, and that of any twenty of his fellow-captives whom he may select.”

At this point Gobin Agace, whom I had instructed, stepped forward and bent his head.

"Sire," began he, "I do know such a ford, and I promise, under peril of life, that I will conduct you to a place where you and your whole army may pass the Somme without any risk."

"Go on," said the king, inspired with a new hope by the peasant's words.

"There are certain fordable places," continued Gobin Agace, "where you may pass, twelve men abreast, twice in the day, and not have water above your knees. When the tide is in, the river is full and deep, and no one can cross it; but, when the tide is out, the river is so low that it may be passed on horseback or on foot without danger. You must, therefore, set out early, so as to be at the ford before sunrise."

"And what call you this ford?" asked the king.

"Sire," replied the peasant, "the bottom of the ford is very hard, of white gravel and stones over which all your carriages may safely pass, and thence it is called *Blanche-taque*."

"Friend," said the king joyfully, "if what you have told me is found to be true, I will give you and all your companions their liberty, and I will besides make you a present of one hundred nobles."

It now seemed that the safety of the King of England and his army depended on the accuracy of Gobin Agace's information as to *Blanche-taque*; and Edward gave orders that, at daybreak, every man should be ready, at the first sound of the trumpet, to march towards the Somme, and make the grand experiment.

CHAPTER XVII

HOW WE FORDED THE SOMME

DEEP and somewhat depressing was the anxiety felt throughout the English army as the night of Wednesday closed over Oisemont; and brief, if any, was the sleep enjoyed by most of the brave islanders whose situation was so critical. Edward, who, both as king and Englishman, was almost overwhelmed with a sense of responsi-

bility as he thought of the duty he owed to the brave men who had placed themselves in jeopardy to assert his rights, scarcely closed his eyes, but waited with impatience the break of day to make the attempt on which seemed to hang the fate of his army and his own reputation as a war-chief.

Rising at midnight, and intent on putting his fortune to the test, the king ordered his trumpets to sound; and, ere the first streak of day glimmered in the sky, he set out from Oisemont at the head of the van, and under the guidance of Gobin Agace, reached the ford of Blanche-taque just as the sun rose. But at that time the tide was so full that the idea of attempting a passage was not to be entertained; and the light of day revealed on the opposite bank a strong force, which had been posted there under one of the lords of Normandy, named Godemar du Fay, with positive orders not, on any account, to allow the English to ford the river.

In fact, Philip of Valois, on arriving at Amiens, had despatched Godemar du Fay, with a thousand horsemen, six thousand footmen, and a body of Genoese, to render the passage of the Somme absolutely impossible; and Godemar had, on his march towards Blanche-taque, been joined by a multitude of peasants and the townsmen of Abbeville, and found himself at the head of twelve thousand men, who occupied a strong position, and presented an imposing front. Edward, however, was not in the least degree daunted. On seeing how matters were he merely indicated his intention of waiting for that part of his army which had not yet come up, and then attempting the passage at all hazards—the feat on which everything now appeared to depend.

Accordingly, when the various divisions of the English reached the Somme, and the tide had in some measure fallen, the king intimated to his marshals that the hour had come for putting all to the test; and shouting, “Let all who love me follow me,” he spurred his charger and dashed into the stream. The Prince of Wales and his knights followed; and the French horsemen, at the same time, left the opposite bank, and met them hand to hand.

A fierce combat now began in the water, and many gallant deeds were performed on both sides. But the French—albeit they fought well—exerted themselves in vain. The king and the prince, heading their knights, bore down all opposition; and, almost ere they had obtained a footing on the bank, the superior prowess of the English was so evident, that the French almost immediately gave way and began to disperse. Moreover, Godemar himself, after remaining for a moment aghast at what was passing before him, concluded—and not without reason—that all was lost; and, while the English were still struggling through the ford, he completely lost hope of holding his ground, gave way to panic, turned his horse's head, and headed the flight.

Having solemnly rendered thanks to God for conducting himself and his army so far in safety, Edward summoned Gobin Agace, gave him and his companions leave to depart, and, in recognition of the service he had rendered, presented him with a hundred nobles and a good horse.

The Somme being thus passed, the king, with a lighter heart, pursued his march, intending to take up his quarters at the town of Noyelle. Learning, however, that it belonged to the Countess of Aumerle, sister of his old friend, Robert of Artois, he sent to assure her that she should not be disturbed, and pursued his way till he came, on Friday, to a village in Ponthieu. Understanding that Philip of Valois was still pursuing with the intention of giving battle, Edward, no longer wishing to avoid an encounter, resolved to encamp, and await what fortune God should send.

“Let us post ourselves here,” he said to his people, “for we will not go farther till we have seen our enemies. I have reason to wait for them on this spot, as I am now on the lawful inheritance of my grandmother, and I am resolved to defend it against my adversary, Philip of Valois.”

Orders for encamping on the plain near the village having been issued, Edward, remembering the infinitely superior number of the army which followed the banner of his foe, and determined to take every precaution to

ensure a victory, in the event of a battle, commanded his marshals to select the most advantageous ground, and to inclose a large park, which had a wood in the rear, within which to place all the baggage-waggons and horses. No time was lost in executing the king's orders; and the English, with a degree of hope unfelt for days, then set about furbishing and repairing their armour, so as to be prepared for the conflict which was not likely to be for many hours delayed.

Meanwhile, Edward, no longer avoiding but courting an encounter, sent his scouts towards Abbeville to learn whether or not there was any sign that Philip of Valois was about to take the field; and the scouts, on returning, said there was no appearance of any movement on the enemy's part. The king then dismissed his men to their quarters with orders to be ready betimes next morning; and, after giving a supper to the earls and barons who accompanied him, he retired to his oratory, and, falling on his knees before the altar, prayed to God that, in the event of combating his adversary on the morrow, he might come off with honour.

By midnight all was quiet, for thorough discipline prevailed throughout the camp, and men stretched themselves to rest; and refreshed their energies with slumber; and I, Arthur Winram, as I spread the skin of a wild beast on the grass hard by the prince's pavilion, and threw myself on the ground, and closed my eyes to dream of marvellous adventures in love and war, said to myself—

“Now let me sleep while there is yet time. Mayhap, ere the sun of to-morrow sets, I may sleep the sleep that knows no breaking.”

CHAPTER XVIII

THE EVE OF BATTLE

It is well known that Robert, King of Sicily, was a great astrologer and full of deep science, and that he had often cast the nativities of Edward of England and Philip of Valois; and that, having found by his astrology and the influence of the stars that, if they met in hostile encounter, Philip would assuredly be defeated, the Sicilian king had

frankly intimated to his royal kinsman the result of his investigations, and strongly advised him to beware of hazarding a battle.

For years this prediction had exercised much influence on Philip's mind ; but on this occasion, the Valois, finding himself at the head of an army so much superior in number to that of his gifted adversary, was ready to throw all hesitation to the winds, and eager for nothing so much as an early opportunity of coming to close conflict. Much, therefore, was he disappointed on hearing that the English had given him the slip and passed the Somme.

"Now," demanded Philip, turning to his marshals, "what is to be done?"

"Sire," replied they, "the tide is now in at Blanche-taque, and you can only cross the river by the bridge of Abbeville."

"Well, then, let us turn toward Abbeville," said Philip, and his marshals gave orders to that effect.

On reaching Abbeville, Philip took up his quarters in the monastery dedicated to St. Peter. He was still hopeful of overtaking and crushing his foe, though perhaps not quite so secure of victory, in the event of a battle taking place, as he had been twelve hours earlier. At all events, he deemed it prudent to await such additions to his army as were likely to arrive ; and from Thursday to the evening of Friday he remained impatiently at the monastery awaiting the coming of his friends and intelligence of his foes.

Wearily passed the hours, and more and more impatient grew Philip. At length, however, as that August day was drawing to a close, the French marshals rode into Abbeville with tidings that the King of England had encamped on a plain in Ponthieu, and that the English army appeared bent on remaining to try conclusions. Perhaps Philip now began to entertain some doubts as to the result, and to call to memory the prediction of the King of Sicily, which, in his rage and desire for vengeance, he had, for a time, forgotten. But, in any case, it was clear that he had gone too far to recede ; and, come what might, he resolved to push forward and fight for the crown which he wore.

So Philip of Valois entertained the princes and great

lords of his army at supper; and, next morning, after hearing mass, he set out in pursuit of the invaders who had wrought him so much mischief and caused him so much trouble. As he left Abbeville the rain fell in torrents, and the march was long and fatiguing. But, still undaunted, Philip pushed forward, and, about noon, came in sight of the English, who were seated on the ground on a large plain, not far from a village which boasted of a windmill. Hitherto obscure, this village was, from that day, to be widely known to fame as the place where the great Plantagenet, after being so keenly hunted, turned to bay.

It was Cressy.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BATTLE OF CRESSY

It was Saturday, the 26th of August, 1346, when Philip of Valois marched from Abbeville to Cressy; and, on the morning of that day, the King of England and the Prince of Wales, rising early, heard mass and took the sacrament. At the same time most of the English confessed their sins and received absolution, that they might go to battle with lighter consciences and heavier hands; and these religious ceremonies having been performed, Edward commanded his men to arm themselves, and, with the aid of his constable and the two marshals, arrayed the army in three divisions.

At the head of the first division Edward placed the Prince of Wales, who was supported by the Earls of Warwick and Oxford. The second was under the Lord de Roos and the Earls of Northampton and Arundel. The third, which the king intended as a reserve, he retained under his own command.

Having thus arrayed his forces, Edward, armed in mail, save his head which was uncovered, mounted a palfrey, and riding from rank to rank, with a white wand in his hand, encouraged the soldiers by his presence, and intreated them to do their duty valiantly. He then ordered that they should refresh themselves with what provisions they had, and retired to his own division; while the men

seated themselves on the grass and ate and drank at their ease. Everything being ready for action, they placed their helmets and weapons beside them, and awaited the coming of their foes, who, still deeming themselves secure of an easy victory, were pushing forward furiously.

It was not, however, till afternoon—not, in fact, till three o'clock—that Philip of Valois, who had left Abbeville in the midst of a heavy fall of rain, came up—at the head of that seemingly countless host, which had gathered from so many countries to his aid—with the handful of invaders he had vowed to crush as a potter's vessel. As the French approached, the sun, which had been obscured all the morning, broke through the clouds, and added to the effect of their chivalrous display. Nor could anything have been more impressive. Banners and pennons flew; armour glistened; bridles rang; and from the armed multitude—panting for blood and carnage—rose loudly shouts of "Kill! kill! kill!"

It happened, on that memorable day, that the Count of Alençon led the van of the French army, and that in front of his cavalry he had placed the Genoese, whose cross-bows were deemed likely to do terrible execution. But, fatigued with a hasty and long march, the Genoese were not in the best condition for the work they were designed to do, and the delay which took place in consequence caused considerable confusion. Philip, as was his wont when in any way annoyed, lost his temper, and, as usual when he did so, his wrath instantly got the better of his discretion.

"In the name of God and St. Denis," he roared, "order the Genoese forward and begin the battle!"

Nothing could have exceeded the imprudence of attacking formidable foes with an army in such disorder as that of France then was. But Philip's blood was boiling at the sight of his enemies seated calmly on the grass, and he was incapable of calculating chances. Accordingly orders to attack were given; and the Genoese, supported by a large body of men-at-arms, splendidly arrayed, approached with a loud shout which was intended to make the English tremble. But the Genoese were much mistaken. No notice whatever was taken of the noise. The Genoese

then raised a second shout. It, however, had quite as little effect as the first. The Genoese then raised a third shout. But not one iota more attention was paid to it than had been paid to the first and second. The Genoese then presented their cross-bows and began to shoot, and instantly—suddenly, as if by magic—the English were in motion and on their feet. Every archer was stringing his bow; every footman was brandishing his pike; every horseman was mounting his steed. All the thirty thousand stood calmly contemptuous of odds, and sternly resolute to conquer or die.

No time was now lost by the English in trying conclusions. Making a step or two forward, at a signal from their leaders, the archers in the division commanded by the prince, which was drawn up in the form and manner of a portcullis or harrow, with the men-at-arms in the rear, bent their bows, and sent a shower of arrows with such force in the face of the foe, that the Genoese flung down their cross-bows, and attempted to retreat. Again Philip lost his temper, and, with his temper, everything like prudence.

“Kill these scoundrels,” shouted he; “for, by St. Denis, they only serve to stop our road to victory.”

“Yes,” cried the Count of Alençon, “let us ride over the bodies of the Genoese.” And, without hesitation, the men-at-arms charged the cross-bowmen, and cut down the unfortunate mercenaries right and left.

Meanwhile the King of England, leaving the post of honour to the Prince of Wales, and without putting on his helmet, took his station by the windmill which I have already mentioned, and kept his eye on every part of the field. Marking the confusion among the French, he sent a messenger with orders to his son to charge upon them where their disarray was greatest; and gallantly was the duty performed. Nothing, indeed, could exceed the heroism with which the heir of England—bestriding his grey barb, inspiring those around him to despise odds, and defy the press of numbers—fought to win his spurs that day. It was an exciting spectacle to see one so young enacting such a part on such an occasion; and, inspired by his example, the English advanced with increasing

enthusiasm, and rushed on with a determination before which their enemies fell or were fain to give way.

But the great lords of France did not relish the idea of being beaten by a warrior in his teens; and, as the conflict went on, the prince was exposed to serious danger. By a simultaneous movement, the Count of Alençon advanced from one side and the Count of Flanders from the other, and, coasting, as it were, the archers, bore down with irresistible force on the prince, at the head of their riders; while Philip of Valois, guided by their banners, hounded forward a body of French and Germans, who, breaking through the archers, engaged in hand-to-hand encounter with the prince's men-at-arms. Fortunately, Lord de Roos and the Earl of Northampton lost no time in bringing the second division to the rescue. But the peril was still so extreme, that the Earl of Warwick, apprehending the worst, sent Sir Thomas Norwich to the king, who was still posted by the wind-mill.

"Sire," said the knight, "the Earl of Warwick, and others about your son, are attacked by the French, and are sorely handled; wherefore they intreat that you will come to their assistance with your battalion; for, if the French increase, as they are like, your son and they will have much to do."

"Is my son dead, or wounded, or felled to the earth?" asked Edward.

"No, sire, but he is hardly matched; wherefore he hath need of your aid."

"Well," said the king, "return to him, and to them that sent you hither, and let them know not to send for me, nor expect me to come this day, let what will happen, so long as my son is alive. And say that I command them to let my son win his spurs; for, if God be pleased, I wish all the glory and honour of the day to be given to the boy and to those who are about him."

Meanwhile, young Edward was bearing himself bravely; and when Sir Thomas Norwich returned and repeated the king's answer, the prince and his comrades were greatly encouraged with the confidence the king reposed in them, and exerted themselves so strenuously, that, as the day

wore away, the battle—lately so fiercely contested—began to wear a most unfavourable aspect for the French. The Counts of Alençon and Flanders, indeed, fought bravely. But their efforts were in vain. Down they both went, never to rise again; down went the Count of Blois and the Duke of Lorraine; down went the Count of St. Pol and the Count of Auxerre; and away fled Charles, Emperor of Germany, leaving his old blind father to his fate.

But John of Bohemia—old and blind as he might be—was not the man to fly; and, as he learned from his knights how the battle was going, and how a boy, whose name he had never heard, was, at the head of a handful of men, vanquishing the chivalry of Christendom, his indignation became high and his excitement great.

“Where,” he asked suddenly, “is my son?”

“My lord,” answered one of his knights, “we know not; but we believe he is fighting.”

“Well, gentlemen,” said the king, “you are all my people, and my friends, and brothers-in-arms this day: therefore, as I am blind, I request you to lead me so far into the battle that I may strike one stroke with my sword.”

“My lord,” was the reply, “we will directly conduct you forward.”

And the knights, that they might not lose the blind king in the crowd, interlaced their bridles with his, and, placing him in front, led him to the charge. But John of Bohemia was not more fortunate than his friends. Good use, indeed, he made of his sword. His charge, however, was as vain as the efforts of the Counts of Alençon and Flanders had been. After penetrating into the English ranks, the Bohemian warriors fell in a body; and the blind king and his knights were found next day among the slain, with their horses fastened to each other by the bridles.

It was now about vespers; and the battle, having raged for hours, was wearing itself out. Hitherto Philip of Valois had enacted the part of a brave warrior, and done stern work with sword and lance. But, as evening sped on, it became evident that all was lost; and John

of Hainault saw that there was no hope of safety save in flight.

“Sire,” said he, riding up to Philip, “retreat while it is yet time, and do not further expose yourself. If you have lost this battle, another time you may conquer.” And, taking the rein of the vanquished man’s bridle, he led him forcibly from the scene of action, just as the shades of evening were beginning to settle over the ground where his adherents lay dead and dying.

By this time, indeed, the struggle was becoming faint, and ere long it was at an end; and King Edward descended from the windmill from which he had watched a mighty and magnificent army go down before his scanty ranks. Placing himself at the head of his division, he advanced towards the Prince of Wales, took the young hero in his arms, and kissed him.

“Sweet son,” said he, “God give you good perseverance. You have most loyally acquitted yourself this day, and you are worthy to be a sovereign.”

“My lord,” replied the prince, bowing low, “the honour of the victory belongs to you alone.”

The King of England and the Prince of Wales, having strictly forbidden all noise and rioting, retired to give thanks to God for the happy issue of the day; and darkness, descending over the ground, now slippery with gore, concealed the carnage; and so well was order kept in the English camp that the stillness of the night was unbroken, save by the wounded who were dying, and the riflers who were prying, and the ravens that were flying over the field where the princely hunters had learned to their cost how terrible was the lion of England when he turned to bay.

CHAPTER XX

MY ADVENTURES AT CRESSY

ON that memorable day when, at Cressy, King Edward so gloriously overcame his enemies, and the Prince of Wales so gallantly won his spurs, I, Arthur Winram, was no inactive spectator of the conflict that was raging and the deeds that were being wrought. Nor, so far as I was concerned, did that day come to a close without such adventures as give colour to life and youth, and furnish food for the memory in more advanced life.

When the French host, with banners waving, and clarions sounding, and crowds of peasants shouting, "Kill! kill! kill!" advanced upon Cressy, and when the English, after sitting quietly on the grass, rose undauntedly to meet their foes, I lost no time in mounting my steed and taking my place among the squires and pages who surrounded the Prince of Wales. At that time the clouds that had for hours obscured the face of day had dispersed, and the sun, shining between the two armies, flashed on their armour and weapons. It was a fair sight to behold, and the eye of the prince gleamed with enthusiasm as he gazed on the exciting spectacle.

"Now may we be thankful to God and to good St. George," exclaimed the young hero, "that the sun at length deigns to shine on our array."

"My lord," said Sir Thomas Norwich with a smile, "that, it seems to me, is a blessing which has been equally vouchsafed to our enemies."

"But mark you not the difference, and how much it is in our favour?" said the prince proudly. "The sun," continued he, "is on our backs, and in their faces; and methinks," added he, "that is a circumstance which they can hardly deem to their advantage, and for which it becomes us to be devoutly thankful."

Such was the conversation that took place by the prince's standard after we mounted our horses, and almost as he uttered the last words the battle began in earnest.

I cannot pretend to have any accurate recollection of what took place for hours after the embattled hosts met in the shock of war. It was in reality my first field; my blood was hot; my brain was on fire; and my memory retains nothing beyond a vague idea of the confusion and carnage caused by the clash of steel, the rush of war-steeds, and the flights of arrows that darkened the air and carried destruction into the ranks of the foemen. I believe, however, that the novelty, the excitement, and the very terror of the scene had upon me an intoxicating influence; and I have been told that I fought like one drunk with new wine.

As the hours sped on, however, I became more calm; and, some time after the attempt of the Count of Alençon and the Count of Flanders to turn the fortune of the day had ended in their fall, and the utter discomfiture of their forces, I recovered possession of my senses sufficiently to be aware that it was after the hour of vespers, that I had left the battle, and that I was keenly pursuing a young warrior, evidently of high rank, who, seeing that all hope of victory had departed, was bent on escaping from a field which his friends had irretrievably lost.

Even in my soberer mood I had no inclination to favour his project of escape, and I loudly summoned him to turn and prove that he was not a coward.

"What ho!" cried I, "turn about. You ought to be ashamed of yourself thus to fly from a single adversary."

For a time the young warrior paid no attention to the reproaches which I launched at him. After a time, however, he seemed to think that it was necessary, for his honour, to give proof of his valour; and, halting, he turned his horse's head, put his sword under his arm after the manner of a lance, and charged me with all his might, hoping to transfix me.

But he was disappointed. I saw my danger in an instant, and taking my sword by the handle, and exerting all my skill and dexterity, I contrived not only to elude the thrust of my adversary, but, in passing, to strike his sword to the ground.

But here I lost myself. In fact, I failed to follow up my advantage with sufficient speed, and my antagonist,

springing nimbly from his steed, ere I was aware of his purpose, repossessed himself of his weapon, and placed himself on the defensive. My blood by this time was again up; and I had already resolved that, if no accident intervened, he should not depart from me on easy terms. But he, believing, doubtless, that, as I was on the winning side, the danger of delay was almost, if not altogether, on his, looked around with the air of one eager to escape from a conflict likely to result in captivity.

"Frenchman," said I, "it is vain to dream of escape. We part not till we have proved which is the better man."

"Who are you that follow me thus?" asked my adversary, apparently astonished at my persistency.

"I am an Englishman, and page to my lord the Prince of Wales," answered I, "and I mortally hate him whom the French call king; and as there can, therefore, be no peace between thee, as a Frenchman, and myself, I pray thee look to thy defence."

"In truth," replied the youth, "I am not, as you deem me, a Frenchman, but Louis, son of the Count of Flanders, and merely fighting against the English as an ally of the King of France."

"Louis of Flanders!" exclaimed I. "By the Holy Rood, so much the worse for you! Ever has your sire been England's bitter foe; and it behoves every Englishman worthy of his country, as I hold myself to be, to avenge, on your head, the blood of Jacob von Arteveldt, who, by your father's instigation, was barbarously murdered."

"Dog of an islander!" cried the young prince, stung to fury, and brandishing his sword, "I cannot longer brook your insolence. Dismount, and receive the chastisement you have provoked."

As he spoke, I leaped from my steed. Instantly our swords met, and we engaged in hand-to-hand conflict—he attacking with all the energy which rage could inspire, and I defending myself with the determination inspired by the hope of making a captive almost worth his weight in gold.

And thus on foot, and in the dusk of evening, took place a fierce encounter, with no lookers-on save our

steeds, which stood silently by. So equally were we matched, that, for minutes, neither of us had the slightest advantage, and the issue was doubtful in the extreme. Fortunately, however, for me, I was now by far the cooler of the two ; and at last, not without great difficulty, I succeeded in disarming him and bringing him to his knee. Immediately I threw myself upon him, and, with visions of the grandeur I was to acquire from taking a prisoner of such rank, I told him, on pain of death, to surrender, rescue or no rescue, and awaited his answer, the nature of which I could hardly doubt.

But, as the proverb has it, there is much between the cup and the lip. Of this I was, on that occasion, destined to learn the whole truth by bitter experience. At the moment I spoke the tramp of cavalry reached my ears ; and, almost ere I could turn my head, my prostrate foe uttered a loud cry for aid, and several horsemen rode forward.

“I should know that voice,” said the foremost of the party, reining up at the distance of a few yards from the spot where I was bending over the prince I had destined for my prisoner.

“Yes, sire, I am Louis of Flanders,” cried my vanquished adversary. “I am Louis of Flanders ; and I lie here at the mercy of an English varlet.”

The horseman who had already spoken, and who was no other than Philip of Valois, turned towards those who attended him.

“Slay the varlet, and rescue my cousin of Flanders,” said he in accents of anger ; and two of his companions dismounted and advanced.

It now appeared that I was doomed to instant death ; and I well-nigh gave myself up for lost. But neither my instinctive sagacity nor my mother wit deserted me. Quick as thought, my resolution was taken.

“Hold !” shouted I loudly and menacingly. “Beware, and be not rash, but listen.”

The two men, whose mission was to kill me, stayed their steps, and the others forming Philip’s escort were silent.

“Mark,” continued I, seeing that I was attended to, and feeling hope revive, “my knee is on this young lord’s

breast; of my hands, one is on his neck, and in the other is a dagger, the point of which touches his throat."

"It is true," cried the Flemish prince in great alarm, a feeling which I took care should not diminish.

"You may kill me, doubtless," added I slowly and sternly, "but not until I have sacrificed a victim. Advance a step farther, and this young lord dies on the instant."

I looked my enemies in the face, and, as well as I could perceive by the dim light, had no reason utterly to despair. My presence of mind had saved me, for the moment at least. The two men stood still, and, a brief conference having taken place among the party on horseback, a cavalier advanced.

"Sir page," said he, "relax your grasp, and permit the young prince to rise, and you shall not be exposed to injury in life or limb."

"No," exclaimed I sternly. "He rises not till I am assured of life and liberty."

"I assure you that you shall be unharmed," was the reply; "and as for your liberty, we must, as a matter of prudence, keep you with us for the time being; but I promise that, within as short a space of time as consists with policy, you will be restored to freedom."

I hesitated.

"And whose word have I for such conditions being fulfilled?" asked I, after a pause, and not without curiosity.

"You have my word," answered the cavalier; "and I am John of Hainault, whose name is not unknown in England."

I, with difficulty, curbed my tongue, and suppressed the reply that sprang to my lips; for the martial Hainaulter had recently deserted the cause of King Edward for that of Philip of Valois; and everybody had told each other with surprise that he had changed sides from the most mercenary motives. But I felt the full peril of my position, and answered with the respect which might be supposed due from me to the uncle of Queen Philippa, and the man who originally escorted her to England.

"The word of the Lord John of Hainault," I said, "is sufficient, and I rely confidently on his honour."

I now hesitated no longer. Rising, I assisted the Flemish prince to his feet; and, while I surrendered my sword to John of Hainault, with all the grace of which I was master, Louis of Flanders approached the stirrup of Philip of Valois.

"Where is your father, cousin?" asked Philip kindly.

"Alas! sire, he is slain," replied the boy—"slain before my eyes;" and he burst into tears.

"Compose yourself, cousin," said Philip kindly; "it has been the fate of many brave men to die to-day."

"You are right, sire," replied the young count suddenly. "It is no time to mourn; it is more meet to think of vengeance."

"Yes, sire," added John of Hainault; "and, that we may be alive and free to fight another day, let us tarry here no longer. I say, as I have already said, that, if you have lost this battle, another time you may be a conqueror. Let us ride."

"And whither go you?" asked the young Count of Flanders.

"To the castle of La Broyes," answered John of Hainault.

"And what are we to make of this English page?" inquired one of the horsemen.

"Kill him!" cried Philip, bending upon me his eyes fully and fiercely, like a hawk that has long been kept in the dark.

"No, sire," protested John of Hainault calmly; "I have pledged my word for his safety; he must mount and accompany us as a prisoner."

"By St. Denis!" exclaimed Philip. "Why cumber ourselves with such as he is, when a thrust would settle the question at once?"

"My lord," replied John of Hainault gravely, "my word is passed; and that is conclusive in my view as to his life being spared, however worthless it may be."

No more time was wasted. I was ordered to mount my horse. I obeyed readily, making the best of a bad business, and, disarmed and vigilantly guarded, accom-

panied the cavaliers who escorted Philip of Valois from the field in which he had met with a defeat more terrible than any that had befallen the warriors of France since that day when the paladins of Charlemagne were attacked and routed by a half-Spanish, half-Moorish host, at the pass of Roncesvalles.

Mournfully and sadly the vanquished warriors rode on through the fields of Picardy; and so much darker grew the night as they pursued their way, that, at one time, they believed they had lost the path, and feared that they would find themselves at the English camp. Late at night, however, they perceived before them the lights of La Broyes, and, with hearts somewhat lightened, they approached the gate. But, as it happened, the gate was shut for the night, and the vanquished Valois was refused admittance into his own fortress.

“Summon the governor,” said Philip, in a commanding tone.

Having been hastily summoned, the governor appeared on the battlements.

“Who is it that calls at such an hour?” demanded the functionary, in a mood by no means serene.

“Open, governor, open!” cried Philip impatiently.

“Who is it?” again demanded the governor, in a querulous tone.

“It is the Fortune of France,” answered Philip solemnly.

And the governor, knowing his master's voice, came down; and the gate was speedily opened; and Philip of Valois and his friends, and I, their captive, silently entered La Broyes; and, so far as I was concerned, that melancholy night ride was ended.

CHAPTER XXI

AT LA BROYES

I HAVE no doubt I entered the castle of La Broyes with a merrier heart than any of the party whose prisoner I happened to be. I was not likely to forget, and I did not forget, that I had formed one of the dauntless army which had just won a marvellous victory; and, albeit I was a captive, I felt—especially after having supped—more than half-inclined to believe my own mishap a trifle when I thought of the effect that would be produced in the cities and hamlets, and castles and granges of England, when through the land ran tidings that England's king had, without even putting on his helmet, put his continental enemies under his feet.

I was still musing on this subject—so grateful to English pride—and was on the point of stretching myself to rest on the floor of the chamber to which I had been conducted, when John of Hainault condescended to come and hold some conversation with me. I had not, of course, any idea of the Hainaulter's motive, and more than suspected that his object was to gain intelligence that might be turned to account. However, I deemed that I was guilty of no indiscretion in convincing him that I was not wholly without importance in the court of that country to which, twenty years earlier, he had escorted Queen Isabel the Fair when she came to dethrone her ill-starred husband, and to which, somewhat later, he had conducted his niece as the bride of King Edward, then on the point of throwing off the influence of his mother and Roger de Mortimer, and entering upon that career of victory which enabled him to take the highest place among the sovereigns of the age.

I flattered myself that I had reason to be satisfied with the impression I produced, and, indeed, soon found the advantage I had gained by asserting my dignity as page to the Prince of Wales. In fact, John of Hainault's countenance began gradually to relax, and he expressed

himself on the event of the day with a frankness hardly to have been anticipated under the circumstances.

"Well, sir page," said he, laughing somewhat carelessly as he prepared to go, "it rejoices me to perceive that you treat your mishap with the indifference which a brave warrior—be he stripling or grey-beard—should treat temporary captivity. And God wots you have your consolation; for, certes, the King of England has won a great victory, and the Prince of Wales has proved himself a wondrous war-chief, considering his years."

"My lord," replied I with enthusiasm, "may the king ever so prevail over his enemies, and may the prince ever prove himself the worthy son of such a father!"

"The King of France," said John of Hainault, looking keenly at me as he spoke, "is inclined to blame Sir Godemar du Fay for his defeat."

"In truth," remarked I, smiling, "it baffles me to discover in what way the unfortunate knight could have prevented it."

"Nevertheless," continued he, "there are some about the king who are loudly calling Sir Godemar a traitor; and the king, enraged at the idea of having been betrayed, threatens to hang him."

I trembled for the safety of Gobin Agace, who had served us so well in the hour of need, but I did not deem myself bound to speak.

"Thinkest thou that Sir Godemar could have played the traitor?" asked he.

"My lord," I answered, "I am a humble page, and unable to judge of such high matters of war and state."

"For my part," continued he slowly, "I entertain no doubt of Sir Godemar's good faith; and I see not how he could have resisted the English army."

"Verily," said I grimly, "it seems to me the reverse of surprising, that Sir Godemar failed to do with a handful of men-at-arms and a rabble of townsmen, what Philip, Count of Valois, failed to do with the flower of the French nobility and half the princes of Europe at his back."

"My friend," said John of Hainault drily, "I advise you to be more respectful when you allude to the chief of

the House of Valois, and to speak of him as King of France; otherwise, assuredly they will have little scruple in hanging you on the nearest tree."

"Well, my lord," replied I carelessly, "I am in their hands, and, doubtless, they can do with me as they please. But, in that case, my lord the Prince of Wales may make inconvenient inquiries after the fate of his page; and King Edward has this day shown that he knows how to avenge lawless executions."

"*Mort Dieu!*" exclaimed the Hainaulter in alarm; "I warn you, for your own sake, not to allow your tongue to outrun your discretion, or you will never more see the green fields and oaken forests of your native land."

And wishing me "Good night," he took his departure, certainly not much wiser than he had come.

I now stretched myself to rest, and slept the sound sleep of youth. Next morning I rose refreshed, and with a feeling that I had little to complain of, save that Fortune had been somewhat unkind in making me a captive in the hour of victory. But I was not without my consolation, and I was rather inclined to show contempt towards my gaolers as men belonging to an inferior nation. But I had prudence enough to keep this feeling in check, and so to insinuate myself into their good graces as to learn something as to the movements of Philip of Valois and John of Hainault.

It appeared, in fact, that Philip and the martial Hainaulter had only made a brief halt at La Broyes. Indeed, Philip neither considered it safe nor politic to remain long in the place. At midnight, after taking some refreshment, he again mounted, and, under the direction of guides familiar with the country, set out for Amiens. By daybreak he reached that place, and, having halted for a while to rest from his fatigue, he pursued his way to Paris, vowing to hang Sir Godemar du Fay, and vainly hoping, perhaps, to discover some way of redeeming himself and his fortunes from the disgrace and disaster of a terrible defeat.

I bore my imprisonment patiently, but could not do otherwise than blame John of Hainault for having, in some degree, forfeited his promise, and left me without

hope of release. I was reflecting somewhat bitterly on the circumstance one day, when the governor of La Broyes appeared, and informed me that, on the morrow, I was to be removed from the fortress.

“And wherefore?” asked I.

“I know not,” answered the governor, with a significant shake of the head.

I felt some alarm, but refrained from exhibiting any feeling. However, I made an effort to obtain information on another, and not an unimportant, point.

“Mayhap,” said I gravely, “you will not deem me impertinent, as affairs stand, in asking to what place I am to be removed?”

“To Bernicles,” was his reply.

My heart rather sank, for the name suggested to my imagination that terrible instrument of torture used by the Saracens. In fact, the only bernicles of which I had heard is an engine made of pieces of wood pierced with holes, into which the legs of captives are thrust. They are put at such a distance from each other as to cause intense pain; and, the holes being at various distances, the legs of the victim are forced to a greater or less extension according to the pain intended to be inflicted. No wonder I started, and felt some sensation of horror, as I turned to the governor, and said gravely—

“I dislike the name. However, when one of your monarchs—indeed, that King of France since canonised and known as St. Louis—was a prisoner of the Saracens, and threatened by them with the bernicles, he said, ‘I am your captive, and it is in your power to do with me as you please.’ So say I.”

The governor left me; and I, having taken my evening meal, lay down to sleep, and dreamed that I was on the point of being put in the bernicles by Philip of Valois and the young Lord De Oy, and that I was rescued from their hands by the ladies of Poix, whose champion I had constituted myself when their father’s castle was taken by the army of invaders.

“Well,” murmured I as I awoke, and convinced myself with some difficulty that it was a dream, “no saying what all this may end in. Assuredly my prospects are not

inviting. Nevertheless, let me not droop or despair. I have heard men say that fortune, in love and war, often turns out more favourable than could have been expected. So let me hope for the best, and trust in God and St. George."

CHAPTER XXII

THE SIEGE OF CALAIS

I HAVE related, in a previous chapter, and in its proper place, that when, on that memorable Saturday on which Cressy was fought, the English found themselves masters of the field, they, in obedience to the king's command, refrained from noise and riotous merriment, and frequently gave thanks to God for the happy issue of the day, and for the wondrous victory which had crowned their efforts.

After vespers the French seemed to have vanished from the ground. At least, they gave no audible sign of being near the camp of their conquerors. No more hooting or shouting was heard, nor any more crying out for particular lords or their banners. Nevertheless, the English made a point of erring on the safe side, and were on their guard against a nocturnal surprise. As the night of Saturday was very obscure, they lighted huge torches, and kindled large fires; and when the morning of Sunday, the 27th of August dawned, and the atmosphere was so densely wrapped in fog that men had some difficulty in recognising their comrades in arms, even at the distance of a few yards, their sense of insecurity increased, and, with the sense of insecurity, the vigilance necessary to avert all danger.

And what did King Edward under the circumstances?

He called his marshals to his presence, and pointed out the danger of the French being allowed to collect and form themselves into a large body; and he ordered his marshals, at the head of a detachment, to make an excursion, and prevent any surprise that might be meditated by the enemy.

The expedition was not without its results. In fact, the marshals encountered a large body of fighting men,

headed by the Archbishop of Rouen and the Grand Prior of France, who had been informed that Philip of Valois was not to fight before Sunday, and still remained in ignorance that he had fought and been discomfited. A conflict immediately took place; and the Archbishop and the Grand Prior having fallen to rise no more, their followers either shared their fate or saved themselves by flight.

Flushed with victory, the marshals returned to the English camp, and, meeting King Edward as he was coming from mass, told him of their adventure, and reported how matters stood. On learning that there was now no danger of the French collecting, the king gave orders for examining into the numbers and condition of the dead.

By this time the fog was vanishing; and ere long the full extent of the carnage became known. And fearful it was to think that, of the mighty army which, twenty-four hours earlier, was marching to Cressy from Abbeville to exterminate the invaders with shouts of "Kill! kill! kill!" more than thirty thousand were corpses. Of these, eleven were princes, and twelve hundred knights.

Our king was not a man to war with the dead. He ordered the bodies of the principal knights to be carried to the abbey of Montenay, and, at the same time, proclaimed in the neighbourhood that he should grant a truce for three days, in order that the French might bury their dead; and, having halted all Sunday on the field of battle, he next morning marched with his army in the direction of Calais, which he was resolved, if possible, to make his own ere he crossed the narrow seas to his native land. No opposition was now offered to his progress. Having marched through the forest of Hardelou and the country of the Boulonois, Edward and his son reached Wissant-on-the-sea; and, having rested with his army during the night of Wednesday at that large town, which some believe to be the Portus Iccius at which Cæsar embarked for the conquest of Britain, they next day appeared before the walls of Calais, with a stern determination, on the part of the king, not to retire till

he had placed the standard of England on its highest tower.

Now it happened that Calais was a town of marvellous strength, and that it had the advantage of being strongly garrisoned. John de Vienne, a knight of Burgundy, was governor, and with him were a number of knights and squires, who vowed to fight to the death rather than allow the place to fall into the hands of the English. But the brave governor was not quite sure of their provisions holding out in the event of a long siege, and, therefore, decided on sending all the poor inhabitants out of the town, in order to diminish the consumption.

It was a Wednesday morning; and greatly surprised was the King of England when he was informed that men, women, and children were issuing in swarms from the gates. Mounting his steed, Edward hastened to the spot, and found that upwards of seventeen hundred human beings were outside the walls, and attempting to pass through his lines.

"Why have you left the town?" asked he, in a voice wherein curiosity was mingled with compassion.

"Because we have nothing to eat," was the reply that rose from a thousand tongues.

"Well," said the king, much moved, "I will allow you to pass through in safety; but first I will order you all a hearty dinner, and, ere you depart, I will give to each of you two sterlings as alms."

"Sire," said the poor Calesians, touched with gratitude, "may God and Our Lady bless thee and thine!"

And the king was as good as his word; and the Calesians went forth to seek new homes, scarcely knowing whither they went.

Such was the scene with which the siege opened.

It appeared evident to King Edward that Calais could not be taken by storm, and he deliberately prepared for a long siege. Between the city and the river, and the bridge, the king caused houses to be built of wood, thatched with straw or broom, and laid out in streets. To this temporary town everything was brought likely to be required for the subsistence of an army. From Flanders and England arrived cloth, and bread, and merchan-

dize in great variety; and every Wednesday and Saturday there was held a market, at which those who had money could buy whatever they desired.

Meanwhile many gallant deeds were done, and many feats of arms were wrought. Few days, indeed, passed without witnessing conflicts between the warriors of England and the warriors of France. Frequently skirmishes took place near the gates and the ditches, between the garrison and the besiegers; and so vigilant were the French who guarded the fortresses around Calais, that at no time could the English venture abroad without the certainty of falling in with parties of the enemy. But, of course, they did constantly venture abroad in search of adventure, and seldom did so without skirmishes, which never ended without some being killed and wounded.

Autumn passed away in this manner. But still King Edward acted with caution and foresight. In vain the impatient and imprudent urged him to take Calais by assault. He perfectly comprehended his position, and expressed his determination to bide his time.

"I know," said he, "that it would be life and labour lost, and that I must stay here till I starve the town into a surrender. Besides, Philip of Valois may come at any time to raise the siege; and I must spare my men, that they may be ready to do battle valiantly in case of need."

But slow was the process of reducing the Calesians to extremity. Gradually, indeed, it became apparent that provisions were stealthily conveyed into Calais; and, after this conviction, speedily followed the discovery that two mariners, Marant and Mestriel by name, and both residents at Abbeville, acted as guides to the men who were adventurous enough to relieve the garrison. On being made aware of this, the king vowed to put an end to the system, which threatened indefinite delay to his conquest, and took immediate steps with that object.

And this is what King Edward did. He caused a large castle to be constructed of strong timbers, and placed between Calais and the sea; he carefully fortified it with engines of war, including the bombards, now coming into use; he garrisoned it with forty men-at-arms and two hundred archers, whose duty it was, night and

day, to guard the harbour and the port so closely that nothing could come in or go out without being sunk or taken; and, having in this way cut off all communication between the beleaguered city and the sea, he calmly awaited the course of events.

“The fruit,” said he, “is not yet ripe; but it will be soon; and, with Calais in our possession, Englishmen will be able to boast—nor in vain—that they carry at their belts the keys of France and Flanders.”

CHAPTER XXIII

MY RELEASE

I AWAITED with something like resignation the hour of my removal from La Broyes to Bernicles; but day after day passed, and I still occupied the chamber in which I had been left when Philip of Valois and John of Hainault took their departure. At length I was visited a second time by the governor of the fortress, and, on looking up, perceived that his air and aspect were much more friendly than on the former occasion.

“Young gentleman,” began he, advancing, “it grieves me that I have treated you with a neglect of which I should not have been guilty had I known that I was so deeply your debtor.”

“Sir,” said I, much surprised, “I am not aware at this moment in what way I have been of service to you.”

“Ah,” replied the governor, “though you knew it not, the ladies of Poix are my near kinswomen; and I would fain show what kindness is in my power to one who, at great hazard to himself, saved them from the violence of a brutal soldiery.”

“Sir,” said I, bowing low, “I pray you to accept my thanks for your courteous compliment; nathless, I have yet to learn that the soldiers of England are more brutal than other soldiers would be under the like circumstances. For the rest, I did no more than a youth apprenticed to chivalry is bound to do on such occasions.”

"Well," continued the governor, "we will not dispute on either point. My business with you is simple. I believe that, of all evils in this life, an Englishman regards captivity with most horror. Is it not so?"

"Doubtless," replied I, reflecting, "to men of a nation whose passion has ever been freedom, the idea of being confined to a narrow space, and within four walls, is the reverse of grateful."

"And you would do something for liberty?" suggested he.

"Certes," replied I quickly; "anything in reason and honour."

"In neither respect should I ask you to offend your conscience," said the governor frankly. "Now listen."

"I am all attention."

"I hold letters of great moment, written by the Lady Joan, Countess of Hainault, to her daughter, Philippa, Queen of England. On them may depend fifty thousand lives, and it is of the last moment that they should be speedily and safely conveyed to her hands. Are you willing to do an errand which, if it result as I would fain hope, will be the means of putting an end to a sanguinary war, and bringing about an honourable peace?"

"Assuredly," answered I, "I see no reason why I should refuse to be the bearer of letters from the Countess of Hainault to my lady the queen."

"In that case," said the governor, "there is no reason why, in twenty-four hours, you should not be on the sea, and tilting over the waves towards England. The condition which I make in setting you at liberty is so slight that I hardly deem it can interfere with your doing our errand. And, mark me, I make the condition light because I fear not to trust you, for where there is so much chivalry there must be much truth."

"Name the condition," said I.

"It is simply this—that you give your promise not to bear arms against the King of France for a year and a day."

I hesitated.

"What, youth!" exclaimed the governor, "do you hesitate?"

"Yes, by St. George! I do; for I know not whether I can, with honour, make such a promise."

"Tush, youth," said the governor, "you are over-scrupulous. Think of William Montacute, the great Earl of Salisbury, and one of your king's foremost barons. He was long a prisoner in the Châtelet, in Paris; and you may have heard of Salisbury's captivity. While he lay in the Châtelet, his countess, whom Englishmen called Katherine the Fair, had the misfortune to bewitch the King of England by her beauty, but with no will of her own."

"The countess," said I, "was chaste as the snow on the top of Cheviot."

"But, however that may have been," continued the governor—"and I question it not—it was at length agreed that Salisbury should be exchanged for the Earl of Moray, on condition of taking an oath never again to serve against France; and such an oath he took."

"Well," said I, after a pause, "my lord of Salisbury was a puissant earl, and I am a nameless page; and, though naught should, or ought to, tempt me to do what my conscience disapproved, merely because it had been done by a great lord; yet, seeing not how it can be inconsistent with my honour to accept your terms, such as they are, and to do your errand, such as you describe it, I cannot but deem that, in accepting your terms and promising to do your errand, I am acting rightly."

"Credit me, you are acting rightly," said the governor.

Next morning I was mounted soon after sunrise, and, with the Countess of Hainault's epistles to Queen Philippa in my custody, I was, under the protection of an escort of horse, riding towards the seaside to embark in a ship that lay at anchor, and ready to sail for the English coast.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FALCON REVISITED

It was the evening of Saturday, the 10th of October, 1346, when the sun was just setting, as I, having crossed the Channel, and travelled from Dover to London, and escaped all perils by sea and land, again found myself safe and sound in that part of the capital of England known as Gracechurch.

I alighted, not without the air of a stripling of consequence, at the sign of the Falcon, and, as I did so, and parted from my horse, I could not but remember how brief was the period that had elapsed since first I set foot in that hostelry, and yet how much in the interval I had seen and experienced. I was certainly a little more advanced in years, and looked, perhaps, less boyish, because taller and stronger, than when I accompanied my grandsire to see London lighted up on Midsummer Eve, and to try my skill at the quintain on the day of St. John the Baptist. But half of the dreams in which I then was in the habit of indulging had been realised. I had seen countless knights, with their plumes, and swords, and prancing steeds, and I had witnessed much of the pomp and pageantry, and something, also, of the horrors, of war. Moreover, I had played a part which flattered my vanity. I had figured in court and camp—had passed through perilous adventures—had stood, sword in hand, as the champion of noble demoiselles—had footed the walls of besieged towns, and had participated in a great victory, the tidings of which set bells ringing and bonfires blazing all over England.

What wonder if, in such circumstances, my young heart swelled with pride, and if I already saw myself, in imagination, with the crest, and plume, and golden spurs of knighthood, leading bands of fighting men to battle, and rushing on to victory in the name of God and St. George?

Musing thus—for I had my full share of ambition as well as vanity—I, with a firm step, entered the hostelry of the Falcon; and, having seated myself at a table, and

summoned the drawer to furnish a stoup of wine, I looked around on the company with the air of superiority which is soon learned among men taking part in military enterprises that are crowned with success.

Many of the ordinary frequenters of the Falcon were there, indulging, as of old, in gossip about the events of the day, and discussing the news with a degree of excitement which convinced me that there was something of great importance in the wind. My attention, however, was attracted to three persons who sat in silence apart from the group of citizens, and separate from each other. One was evidently a yeoman of Kent; the second was a young priest, with a restless eye and a wild manner; and the third, whose dress indicated that he ranked as a squire, was a tall, strong man of forty or thereabouts, with fair hair and a grey eye, whose glance told plainly as words could have done that he was deficient neither in satire nor sagacity. He called for a quart of ale just as I entered, and proceeded to discuss the liquor with evident relish.

I was on the point of putting a question to this worthy gentleman as to the latest news from Calais, and had just prepared myself to open the conversation by drinking deep of the wine which the drawer had brought me, when Thomelin of Winchester entered. I smiled in recognition, and mine host, observing me, stared as if he had seen a ghost.

"What!—eh!—Arthur, my lad!" exclaimed he, recovering himself, "can this possibly be you, and in the body?"

"None other than myself, good Thomelin," answered I laughingly, "and flesh, and blood, and bone to boot; you may take my word for it. But now tell me, for I long to learn, how fares my grandsire, and how fares my mother?"

"By St. Thomas!" replied he gravely, "not so well as they are wont to do, for they have heard that you had fallen in the wars, and are sadly grieved to think of it."

"And yet," said I half-laughing, "here you see me with a whole skin, and hardly a scar to bear witness to the perils I have passed."

"And you have come home, young man," interrupted the squire, speaking with a burr which sufficiently indicated his Northumbrian birth, and possibly his Danish origin—"you have come home at a time when so many are flocking to Calais to join the king and fight for his honour?"

"Even so, worthy squire," replied I, not without a spice of temper in my voice. "It is the fortune of war, and, certes, it is with no good will of mine own that I am in London and not before Calais. As ill-luck would have it, I was taken prisoner on the evening of the day of Cressy, and I only regained my liberty on condition of forthwith returning to England, and not again drawing my sword against Philip of Valois for a year and a day. What could I do?"

"Nothing but make the best of a bad bargain," answered the Northumbrian. "But assuredly you have reached England at a good time for a stripling who is afraid of his sword rusting in the scabbard; for seldom has England had greater need of stout hearts and strong hands than now."

"What mean you?" asked I, my curiosity as to the news of the day reviving.

"What!" exclaimed Thomelin, excitedly grasping my arm, "have you not heard that David Bruce, whom the Scots call king, has come over the Border with all his men of war and wild Galwegians, and that he is ravaging the West Marches with fire and sword?"

"Not a word of it," replied I, much amazed.

"It's not the less true, however, as I'm likely to know to my cost," observed the Northumbrian gravely.

"May the saints, and especially St. George and St. Edward, defend us!" exclaimed I, after a moment's pause; "and that this invasion of the Scots should happen when the king and so many of his nobles are beyond the seas, might provoke every English saint in the calendar. But let us hope for the best, seeing that the Lords Neville and Percy are at home in command of the Northern counties; and fame belies them if they are not the men to give the Scots a warm reception."

"I doubt it not, Arthur, my lad!—I doubt it not!"

cried Thomelin with enthusiasm. "Shame be upon the Neville and the Percy if they did less than their very best at such a time, and in King Edward's absence, especially since Queen Philippa has left for York, to show them her countenance and aid them with her counsel. And, if they do not, methinks it will be the duty of every Englishman, no matter how humble a body he may be, to gird on his father's sword, and go northward to fight for his king's honour and his country's safety."

"Mine host," interrupted the young priest, breaking silence for the first time, "thou speakest of what thou knowest naught, and canst not comprehend. Why should the poor and the oppressed gird on their swords to defend a land where kings and nobles do as they list, and where men who are not kings or nobles are compelled to draw the water and hew the wood for others, and used worse than beasts of burden?"

"Beshrew me," said Thomelin, half in jest, half in earnest, "if it does not seem to me dangerous for a man to speak of kings and nobles in such a strain, even when he has a frock and cowl to protect him."

"Besides," urged I quietly, "I believe it is said in Holy Writ—I have heard, at least, that it is—'Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber; for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.'"

"What sayest thou to it, good friend?" asked Thomelin of the Kentish yeoman.

"For my part," answered the yeoman, speaking with great caution, "nothing have I to say against the king, who, doubtless, is a good king, and one likely to add much to the country's pride; and, for riches, let me say bluntly that I am not so poor as to deem the possession of riches a crime. But answer me this, Master Thomelin, how are men to live, if the king's purveyors continue, as now, to oppress and plunder at their pleasure? Answer me that."

"Well, yeoman, I'm sure I know not," replied Thomelin prudently. "But this I do know, that my kinsman, Adam of Greenmead, declared that when Edward I.

reigned, and Eleanor of Castile was queen, the country people were not harassed by royal purveyors."

"No," cried the yeoman triumphantly, "not in my grandfather's time. That is what I tell my neighbours. But now a man trembles when a horn is heard, lest it should be that of the king's harbinger. One of them comes, and he cries he must have oats, and he must have hay, and he must have litter for the king's horses; and scarcely is he gone when a second comes, and he must have hens, and geese, and a variety of things; and a third comes at the heels of the second, and he must have bread and meat, and what not."

"My good friends," said the priest, springing to his feet, and speaking in a loud voice, and with eccentric gestures, "all this is vain talk. I tell ye that you must lay the axe to the root of the tree; for things cannot go on well in England, or ever will, until everything shall be in common, and the lords no more masters than ourselves. How ill they have used us, ye know; but for what reason they hold us in bondage they cannot tell. Are we not all descended from the same parents, namely, from Adam and Eve? And what can they show, or what reasons can they give, why they should be more masters than we? I tell you that things never will be well in England till there shall be neither vassal nor lord, and all distinctions levelled."

"Body o' me, father!" exclaimed Thomelin, interrupting, "curb your tongue, I pray thee, or you'll get me and my house into trouble. We will take the rest for granted. I know," added he mockingly, and then half chanted, half repeated, the rhyme which has since agitated the country to its centre, and shaken the throne to its foundation—

"When Adam delved, and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?"

"On my faith," said the Northumbrian, with a grim smile, "I cannot but be strongly of opinion that, as affairs now are, it is mighty well for England that we have learned to do something more to the purpose than delve and spin. Now that the Scots are on this side of the

Border, I trow it will require something more than spades and spindles to drive them back again; and of this I am well assured, that they would never go for a few fine words about Adam and Eve."

"Well answered," exclaimed Thomelin admiringly, and the company having generally expressed their concurrence in Thomelin's opinion, the Northumbrian gave a slight indication of the satisfaction he felt with himself by calling for another quart of ale, and drinking it off, perhaps to his own health.

"Who is that mad demagogue?" I asked of Thomelin in a whisper.

"Oh," replied mine host, "it's only the crazy priest who is called Jack Ball. Nobody values his words more than they do a sough of wind."

"And who," asked I, "is the stalwart Northman?"

"John Copeland, an esquire of Northumberland and, I believe, a doughty man-at-arms as ever faced a foe. He has been at Westminster on affairs of state connected with the irruption of the Scots; and he turns his face homeward to-morrow to take part in the war."

The name of Copeland was not new to me. In fact, I had often heard it mentioned with honour: for the Northern esquire had figured in a prominent manner, ten years earlier, in the operations before the castle of Dunbar, when Cospatrick's stronghold was being besieged by the Earl of Salisbury, and defended by Black Agnes, Earl Patrick's famous countess; and he had, on a memorable occasion, by his instinctive sagacity, saved Salisbury from being taken prisoner. Remembering these things I looked at him with curiosity and interest; moreover, having learned that the queen had set out for York, and perceiving the necessity of following with the letters intrusted to my care, I felt that I could hardly do better than beg the Northumbrian to permit me to bear him company on the road.

"And so," said I, opening the business forthwith, "it seems the queen has set out for York?"

"Assuredly," answered Copeland, "Queen Philippa, like a courageous dame and a good wife as she is, has gone northward to the war, to make sure that, in the

absence of her lord the king, neither his honour nor his interest suffers."

"Ay, ay," echoed Thomelin—"a courageous dame and a good wife, in thought, word, and deed."

"Craving your pardon," said I, again addressing myself boldly to the great Northern warrior, "I am a stranger to you, and, perhaps on account of my youth, my name, unlike your own, is unknown to fame. But I am in the service of my lord the Prince of Wales, and have fought for the King of England; and I am charged with a message to the queen which I am in duty bound to deliver without delay. May I crave permission to ride northward under your protection?"

"Surely, surely, youth," answered Copeland cheerily. "Blithe will I be of your company. You can beguile the way, which is long, with stories of what you have seen and done in the wars of France, and, maybe, strike a good blow in case of any enemies turning up as an obstacle in our path."

"Well," said I, with a smile, "it would ill become one whose name is unknown to boast in the presence of a warrior so distinguished as yourself; but this much, at least, I will say in my own praise, that I fought, without flinching, at the gates of Caen, and on the field of Cressy, not to mention the ford of Blanch-taque; and I have yet to learn that I have lost courage since that day when Englishmen won a battle that will be recorded by chroniclers, and performed exploits that will be celebrated by minstrels."

"Enough," said Copeland, smiling at my youthful enthusiasm. "We will take the road northward on the morrow, and, where we are going, you'll find foes enough on whom to exercise your valour, and foes, too, who are worthy of a brave man's steel, be he knight, or squire, or page; for credit me, who have long known them, and who love them not, that—be the Scots good or bad in other respects—they fight bravely and well."

"Ho, ho!" exclaimed I, "that is something I have learned by meeting you. Methought that, at Halidon, they fled from our king and his men as deer before the hunters."

"So they did," replied the squire; "but it's not their wont; and, let me tell you, they fight not the worse from being away from their own country, and having some plunder to fight for. They are little inconvenienced by long marches. In fact, when they make irruptions into England, they march from twenty to four-and-twenty leagues, without halting, as well by night as by day."

"By St. George!" exclaimed I in amazement, "surely the archers and spearmen must lag behind and tail off as they go?"

"Ah," replied the Northumbrian, shaking his head wisely, "they are all mounted—the knights and esquires on large bay horses, the common people on little gallo-ways; and they bring no carriages with them on account of the mountains they have to pass."

"Wonder upon wonders! But, then, how do they carry their provisions?"

"Oh, what provisions want they?—not bread and wine, I trow. Such are their habits of sobriety, in time of war, that they will live for a long time on flesh half sodden, without bread, and drink the river water without wine. Nor have they any occasion for pots or pans; for they dress the flesh of cattle in the skins, after they have taken them off; and, being certain of finding plenty of provisions in the country invaded, they bring none with them."

"Proceed."

"Well, every man carries a broad plate of metal under the flap of his saddle, and a little bag of oatmeal behind his saddle, and when they have eaten too much sodden flesh they put the plate over a fire, mix their oatmeal with water, and make a cake like a biscuit, which they eat to warm their stomachs; and such is their way of living while the war lasts."

"Well, sir squire," said I, "I am beholden to you for the information you have given me. I am a very young warrior, albeit I have seen sieges and a foughten field, and am curious about such matters. And beshrew me if it will not mortify me much if fortune does not favour me with an opportunity of crossing swords with some of these Scots, whose customs sound so barbarous; for I should

like to prove what mettle there is in men who live on sodden flesh, and oatmeal, and river water."

"Fear not, youth," replied the squire, with a smile of encouragement; "when you mount, and take the north road in my company, you will be in a fair way of having your wish."

CHAPTER XXV

THE CRISIS

BEFORE describing my adventures in the North of England, I must pause in my narrative to explain how the Scots, in time of truce, happened to make that sudden inroad into England which alarmed the country, startled the court, excited the capital, and caused Queen Philippa to remove from Windsor to York.

It was when the first Edward was king, and when Philip the Fair reigned in France, that the chiefs of the house of Capet, as sovereigns of France, began to encourage that deadly hate of the Scots towards England which speedily proved productive of so much mischief to both countries; and Philip of Valois, on assuming the French crown, did not fail to imitate the example which, in this respect, his predecessors had set. From the time of the battle of Halidon Hill to the year when King Edward—exasperated, as he well might be—embarked for Flanders, promises of aid, and supplies of arms and warlike stores, kept the Scots in insurrection, and encouraged them in their stubborn resistance.

But such a policy could not be long pursued with impunity; and Philip ought early to have discovered that, in his case, it was not to be pursued with impunity. In any case, the loss of his navy at Sluys, and the loss of his army at Cressy, would have taught an ordinary man that the dishonest policy which he was practising was sure to bring still greater disasters in its train. But he was incapable of profiting by experience.

At the time when the princes and the chivalry of France were trodden down at Cressy, the crown of Scotland was

worn by David Bruce, son of the conqueror of Bannockburn; and at that time he was about the age of twenty-three, and eager to signalise himself by some such exploits as had made his father celebrated throughout Christendom. But, with such a king as Edward III. on the English throne, this was by no means an easy matter, either in England or Ireland; and perhaps the royal Scot might long have talked, without attempting, had he not been tempted by the representations of his continental ally to undertake the expedition which, in the autumn of 1346, caused so much alarm throughout England.

It appears that when King Edward marched his victorious army to Calais, and sat down before that city with a determination to take it ere leaving, Philip of Valois perceived the impossibility of contending single-handed with such an adversary. In his desperate circumstances, the vanquished Frenchman was not likely to forget the existence of the King of Scots; and, having prevailed on David Bruce to invade England, as the likeliest means of drawing off part, at least, of the English forces from the siege of Calais, and sent men to aid and money to encourage the Scots in their enterprise, he awaited the result with confidence.

No time was lost by the young King of Scots in carrying the project into execution. A Parliament having been hastily held at Perth, and the Scottish magnates having sanctioned a war, their king drew together a numerous army, and, about the opening of October, entered England by the West Marches. A mighty host it was, all things considered, that marched under his standard. Three thousand men-at-arms, knights, and esquires; thirty thousand men on geldings and galloways; and a large body of Genoese and French auxiliaries; such was the army at the head of which David Bruce and his earls and barons came over the Border, to avenge the defeat of Cressy, and to save the city of Calais.

Much was the mischief which the Scots wrought, and great was the terror which they spread around. It seemed that the days of Randolph and Douglas had returned, and that the Scots were again, year after year, to wreak their savage fury on the Northern counties. Men bent

their brows and clenched their hands, and women wept and children wailed, as they fled from their homes to the woods and mountains, to avoid invaders, many of whom knew little of mercy, not, perhaps, even the name.

Commencing operations at the castle of Liddel, the Scots took that stronghold, put the garrison to the sword, and beheaded Walter Selby, the governor, in their king's presence, without so much as suffering him to be confessed. This done, they pursued their way through Cumberland and the southern parts of Northumberland, ravaging and burning; and, still spreading desolation as they went, they advanced towards the city of Durham. So far their march had been unopposed, and they had had it all their own way. At this stage, however, an army not to be daunted by superior numbers frowned defiance and demanded revenge. Not only Lord Neville and Lord Percy, but Baliol, Moubray, D'Eyncourt, and De Roos were there to bar the way; and at the head of the force they had mustered was the queen herself—the wife and mother of heroes—whose presence inspired every man there with the resolution to fight with the courage and energy of two.

In fact, Philippa no sooner heard that the Scots were preparing to invade England than she hastened to York, and summoned all the peers and prelates who were in the country to meet in the capital of the North. With their counsel and aid she did wonders, and soon found herself at the head of an army numbering scarce more than a third of the invaders, it is true, but composed of men making up in discipline and valour what they lacked in numbers, and eager to rival the achievement by which their countrymen, fighting on the Continent, had acquired so much fame.

At the head of this formidable force the queen marched to Durham; and, while the English lay in Auckland Park, she, in the city of the same name, awaited the coming of the Scots, who, flushed with a success to which, in recent years, they had been little accustomed, regaled their imaginations with the anticipation of a triumphant issue to their adventurous enterprise.

It cannot be said that the patience of the English was put to any severe test. The reverse was the case; for the march of the invaders had been rapid; and on Friday, the 16th of October, the Scottish vanguard came near the town, and skirmished with some parties of English who were abroad.

The Scots fell back, however, on the main army, and, in retiring, burned some hamlets. The smoke and the flames exasperated the English, and the soldiers demanded to be led to battle. But on this point their chiefs were, fortunately, discreet enough not to gratify their wish. Neville and Percy were leaders of sapience, and Baliol, who had been once King of Scots, well knew, from experience, how to deal with men of the nation he had ruled.

"No," answered they in reply to the shouts of the soldiers. "Nothing must be done rashly, especially in the absence of our lord the king; for such is the crisis we are approaching, that we hazard, not only our own lives, but his realm."

As the day passed on, however, messengers from David Bruce came to say that, "if the English were willing to come forth, he would wait for them and give them battle."

"Tell those who sent you," was the reply, "that we accept the offer, and that we will not keep our enemies long waiting."

On receiving this message, the King of Scots, who had previously encamped in the park of Beaurepaire, drew out his army on Durham Moor, and, setting his men in order for battle, formed them into three battalions. He himself commanded the centre host; on his right were Lord Douglas and the Earl of Moray; on his left was the High Steward of Scotland—all warriors whose fathers had followed the fortunes, and participated in the triumphs, of his hero-sire.

Having thus arrayed his men, the King of Scots retired to Beaurepaire, and awaited the coming of Saturday to encounter his foes.

In vain Lord Douglas recommended him to retire to the woods, and retreat without an engagement.

“No!” exclaimed the king with disdain. “We are the sons of the men who conquered at Bannockburn, and by St. Andrew! we are bound to prove that we have inherited the valour which they so often displayed on the crests of foemen.”

And so, within a few miles of the armed foes, who had sprung from hamlet, and grange, and castle to repel his invasion, the young king lay down to rest, all eagerness for the hour when he was to try his fortune at the game of carnage.

Nor was there much danger of his patience being severely tried; for the crisis of his fate had arrived.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE EVE OF BATTLE

IT was the evening of Friday, the 16th of October, 1346, when, in the company of Copeland, the Northumbrian esquire, I reached Durham, and first beheld the city associated with the memory of St. Cuthbert.

And fine and picturesque, I did confess, was the appearance which the place presented at the close of that October day, when threatened by the Scottish foe. The eye of my comrade gleamed with provincial pride as he marked the impression produced on me by the sight; and he exclaimed, in a tone of triumph—

“A fair city.”

“Passing fair,” I replied; and, not unwilling to display the little knowledge I possessed, I added, “and it seems to me to be, like Rome, built on seven hills.”

“God’s truth,” said Copeland, “I know not on how many hills Rome may be built; but I have heard men say that whoso hath seen the situation of Durham has seen the map of Zion, and may save himself the trouble of a journey to Jerusalem.”

About seventeen miles to the south of Newcastle, and sixty-seven miles to the north-west of York, in the centre of the shire of Durham, the river Wear, in one of its windings, makes a curve in the shape of a horse-shoe,

and incloses a lofty peninsula, or promontory. On this promontory, which is formed of seven hills, surrounded by hills still higher than themselves, stands the city of Durham, with its castle, its abbey, its churches and buildings, mirrored in the clear waters of the river, whose steep banks are clothed with hanging woods.

At a distance of some miles to the south of Durham is the castle of Auckland, the seat of the bishop, with a park abounding in deer and wild cattle; while three miles to the north-west is Beaurepaire, another fair park, in which stands the house to which the prior is wont, on occasions, to retreat for quiet and contemplation. At this crisis both of these parks were camps, and their silence and privacy were broken by the noise of arms and the tramp of warriors; for the English army lay at Auckland, awaiting orders to march, and the King of Scots lay at Beaurepaire, awaiting the coming of the enemy, and treating with great disdain, as I have written, the proposal made by some of his nobles to make for the woods, and retreat without risking an engagement.

Such was the position of the two armies when having entered Durham, I proceeded to the castle, and craved an audience of the Queen of England. At first it appeared doubtful whether it would be granted; but a hint as to my being charged with letters of importance from France opened the doors, and I was conducted to the presence of the royal lady on whose energy and presence of mind the fate of England, at that moment, in a great measure depended.

At the time when Philippa of Hainault was first brought to England and wedded to King Edward, at York, she was a girl of seventeen, with a brilliant complexion, and a tall, graceful figure, whom minstrels praised in verse for her "roseate hue and beauty bright." Eighteen years, however, had passed over her head, during which she had become the mother of ten children, and she retained little of that youthful beauty which minstrels had celebrated.

But what Philippa had lost in juvenile brilliance she had gained in matronly dignity; and at thirty-five, what with her still comely features, her serene aspect, and her stately, though kindly manners, she looked every inch a queen, of

whom Englishmen might have said, as they did of her predecessor, Eleanor of Castile, that "to our nation she was a loving mother, the column and pillar of the whole realm."

And never, perhaps, had the Queen of England appeared to greater advantage than when, at this crisis, and in the hour of dismay, she, in the absence of her hero-husband and hero-son, defied all dangers, and ran all risks, to do her duty to the country over which her husband reigned, and the kingdom to which her son was heir.

As I knelt and presented the epistle with which I had been intrusted by the Governor of La Broyes, she looked at me with something like surprise, and, taking the letter from my hand, said gently—

"Rise, sir page; how is this? I thought you were lost."

"Yes, madam," replied I, in some confusion; "but you see I am found again."

"And how came you by this?"

"There, madam, hangs a long tale, with which, mayhap, it were better not to weary your highness at present."

"I will hear it," said the queen.

And taking this expression of her wish as a command, I, with the utmost brevity, related my adventures, and the circumstances under which I had undertaken the duty of messenger. Having listened attentively, and questioned me as to what I remembered about the battle of Cressy, and the bearing of her son on that great day, the queen expressed her approval of my conduct, and immediately gave a proof of her confidence in my fidelity and discretion.

"My lord the king," said she, "will naturally be all anxiety to hear the result of the battle which is about to be fought; and I must needs, without a moment of unnecessary delay, despatch a messenger to him with the tidings, whether of weal or woe."

"Madam," said I, "do not fear—or, rather, I should say, do not doubt—under the eyes of so gracious a lady, that the English soldiery will do their duty, and the beams of victory will rest on St. George's cross."

A frown and a smile passed over the queen's face as showers and sunshine succeed each other on an April day. My audacity caused the frown ; my enthusiasm caused the smile. But she quickly gained her serenity.

"You are too young to have any title to express opinions so boldly," she said ; "and yet I deny not that much must be overlooked in the case of those who have fought by my son's side. However, hold yourself in readiness to proceed to Calais at a moment's notice."

"Madam," urged I earnestly, and like a condemned man begging for mercy, "I would fain hope that the prospect of so high an honour as carrying a message to my lord the king may not be inconsistent with my drawing my sword against the Scots, and striking a blow for his honour and the safety of the kingdom."

"Better not," replied the queen. "It may be cruel to gainsay you. But you are too young to die, sir page, and will live, please God, to win distinction some other day."

I bowed low, but my countenance indicated my disappointment.

"But," continued she, "the Lords D'Eyncourt and Ogle, with a body of cavalry selected for the duty, are to attend me as a guard during the battle. I accord to you the honour of being one of the party ; and it is an honour which I trust that you, as a disciple of chivalry, in the service of the Prince of Wales, will not fail highly to value. You are dismissed."

As she spoke, the queen began to read the epistle of the Countess of Hainault, over which she had already glanced ; and, having bent my knee, I retired, not without a feeling of disappointment. Indeed, I must frankly confess that, however high the distinction of attending the Queen of England on such an occasion, I should have relinquished it without a sigh ; for so completely had Copeland's stories of adventures and contests with Scottish warriors taken possession of my imagination, that I would gladly, at that moment, have resigned all ambition, and all hopes of rising in life, under the patronage of royal personages, for the privilege of riding to battle with the brave Northumbrian, and charging, sword in hand, by his

side into the ranks of foemen, wherever the excitement was highest and the conflict keenest.

I sought Copeland, and, having hastily communicated the result of my audience, expressed the regret I felt at being deprived of the gratification of drawing my sword in his company.

“I grieve to hear it,” observed the Northumbrian; “for, between ourselves, I have formed a scheme for acquiring fame and fortune at a grasp.”

“By St. George!” exclaimed I. “Tell me, I implore you, how that is to be accomplished. It may serve me on another occasion.”

“Breathe not a word on the subject to living mortal,” said he. “Hark—in thine ear—I know this King of Scots by head mark. In the battle I will track him as the russet bloodhound does a marauder; and ere to-morrow’s sun sets, he shall yield himself my prisoner, rescue or no rescue.”

“A most noble enterprise, on my faith,” exclaimed I admiringly, “and one, I ween, that will bring both honour and profit, if brought to a successful termination. But you must hold me excused if I remind you that he is not likely to yield, even to you, on easy terms. I have heard something of this King David at the English court, and I gather that, albeit he lacks the mind and subtlety which made his father great, he lacks not the courage or the prowess in war which has so long been associated with the name of Bruce.”

CHAPTER XXVII

FACE TO FACE

BRIGHT and clear dawned the morning of the 17th of October, 1346—the Saturday after the Feast of St. Michael—and on that morning great was the commotion, great the excitement, in the city of Durham. At an early hour, Queen Philippa was astir; and mounting her white palfrey betimes, she rode, escorted by knights, and nobles, and prelates, to where the English were encamped in Auckland Park.

Nor was it without an instinctive prescience that the beams of victory would fall on the red cross of St. George ere the sun went down behind the western hills ; for the example of King Edward and his youthful heir had inspired the nation with a warlike ardour which defied odds, and every Englishman from Cornwall to the Tweed regarded himself as belonging to a superior and conquering race. Twenty years earlier, the terror inspired by the Scots was such that a hundred Englishmen looked with dread on half-a-dozen of the men whom the first Edward had driven before him at Falkirk. But since the days of Halidon a marvellous change had occurred, and every man who fought for the martial Plantagenet by whom that change had been wrought went to battle with a conviction that victory sat upon his helm.

On reaching the camp in Auckland Park, the queen gave orders for the army being drawn out in three divisions, each of which had its proportion of archers and men-at-arms. Of these, the first was commanded by Lord Percy, the second by Lord Neville and Lord Hastings, the third by Lord Moubray and Sir Thomas Rokeby, Sheriff of Yorkshire. A body of cavalry—chiefly composed of tall Northern men, with Danish blood in their veins, and the Danish burr on their lips—was kept in reserve, to give aid to those who might need it most, and intrusted to the leading of Lord De Roos, and Edward, Lord Baliol, whose experience in the Scottish wars eminently qualified him for the post.

These arrangements having been made, and the army being ready to march against the invaders, Queen Philippa rode along the lines and addressed herself to the soldiers. She reminded them that the honour of their king and the safety of their country were at stake ; and she implored them, in their sovereign's absence, to do their duty, to fight manfully for his crown, and avenge the injuries which their countrymen had suffered at the hands of their barbarous foes.

“O queen,” shouted the soldiers in reply, “we will acquit ourselves loyally in the absence of our lord ; and never shall it be said that we fought the less valiantly because he was not present to behold our deeds.”

“Then,” replied the queen, “I leave you to encounter your enemies and the king’s, and I recommend you to the protection of God and good St. George.”

Escorted by the Lords D’Eyncourt and Ogle, Queen Philippa retired to a short distance to witness the engagement, and the English, with banners flying, moved forward in the direction of Merrington, and, halting on the rising ground, could plainly descry the movements of the Scots on the hills to the west.

Here the chiefs paused to consider their position, and hesitated whether they should advance on the Scots or await the attack of their foes on the ground they occupied; but, as the marshals and standard-bearers continued to move slowly forward, the army insensibly followed, and in this way, without arriving at any decision, they reached Ferryhill.

At this point an unexpected incident brought matters to a crisis. Lord Douglas, at the head of a body of cavalry, had that morning scoured the country as far as Ferryhill, and was returning to the Scottish camp, when he suddenly found himself in presence of the English host, arrayed for battle. His situation was most perilous. But his courage did not desert him, and shouting “A Douglas! a Douglas!” he couched his spear, broke through the English ranks, and, closely pursued in the direction of Sunderland Bridge, spurred towards the camp of the Scots. In the chase, five hundred of his horsemen fell, never more to rise; but Douglas, holding on his course, reached the tent of his king in safety, and thither carried intelligence that the English were coming, and would soon be at hand.

Meanwhile, having re-formed their ranks, the English pursued their way to the high ground above the Wear; and then, leaving Durham on the right, they marched in order of battle to the Red Hills—irregular acclivities, rising steeply from the river.

“Here,” said the lords in command, “we will abide the coming of our foes and such an issue as Fortune shall send us, so help us God and St. George!”

In the interval, the King of Scots, roused by Lord Douglas, issued orders for marching against the enemy,

and, leaving his camp, advanced to the Red Hills to give battle. As he had arrayed his force, the battalion of the High Steward of Scotland faced Lord Percy; that led by the king in person faced Lord Neville and Lord Hastings; and that under Lord Douglas and the Earl of Moray faced Lord Moubray and Sir Thomas Rokeby.

It was an awful moment when the embattled hosts stood face to face, and, in profound silence, gazed for a time on each other, ere coming hand to hand, and meeting in the shock of war.

CHAPTER XXVIII

NEVILLE'S CROSS

ON the morning of that day when the embattled hosts of England and Scotland stood facing each other at the Red Hills, the prior and monks of Durham, occupying a hillock hard by, elevated the corporax cloth of St. Cuthbert in sight of both armies, and, kneeling around, prayed earnestly to their patron saint.

On the spot then occupied by the prior and monks a graceful monument of stone now commemorates a famous battle and a signal victory. It was, in fact, erected by Ralph, Lord Neville, to commemorate the conflict in which I was in part an eye-witness, in part an actor, and wherein were wrought high feats of arms, which I am about to describe, for the encouragement of all valiant hearts, and to show them honourable examples.

About three hours after sunrise the silence which reigned for a brief period was broken by a flourish of trumpets, followed by the shouting of warriors and the clangour of mail. Impatient to prove himself worthy of bearing the name and wearing the crown of Bruce, the young King of Scots ordered his trumpets to sound a charge, and, ere the sound died away, the High Steward, at the head of his battalion, composed wholly of cavalry, and armed with axes and broadswords, advanced upon that part of the English army arrayed under the banner of Lord Percy.

At the same moment the archers in front of Lord

Percy's men-at-arms took several steps forward, and a shower of arrows darkened the air. But the effect was not what was expected. Galled by the shafts, and exasperated almost to madness, the High Steward and his cavalry charged forward with shouts of wrath and scorn, drove the archers back upon the men-at-arms, and, plying axe and broadsword with ferocious vigour, succeeded in throwing the whole battalion into such confusion that Lord Percy in vain said, "My merry men, fight on!" and, ere the battle had lasted an hour, victory seemed so decidedly to incline to the Scots, that I, as a looker-on, felt a degree of alarm I should in vain attempt to express in words.

"The saints defend us!" exclaimed D'Eyncourt, who held the queen's rein.

"All will be lost," cried Lord Ogle. "O for one hour of my lord the king!"

"No," said the queen, calm in the great peril, "the field is yet ours. Boy page," turning towards me, "ride fast to the Lord Baliol; tell him to throw his cavalry on the Scottish van, break their ranks, and disperse them; but no pursuit. Away! quick! or he will have to fight, not for victory, but for life."

I bent my head low; I gave my horse the spur, and, without wasting a moment, communicated Philippa's command.

"The queen is right," said Baliol thoughtfully. "Gentlemen," said he to his followers, "let us charge the High Steward, drive back the enemy, but no pursuit. Strike for King Edward and England! On, on! A Baliol! a Baliol!"

And the tall horsemen of the North spurred against the Scots.

The effect was instantaneous. The rush was not to be resisted. Abandoning the advantage he had gained, the High Steward exercised all his skill to make good his retreat, and Baliol, without following, allowed him to go off unmolested. In fact, Baliol's brilliant charge had turned the fortune of the field; and as Lord Moubray and Sir Thomas Rokeby attacked Lord Douglas and the Earl of Moray, Baliol turned his eyes towards the place

where the Lords Neville and Hastings were contending, with inferior numbers, against the centre of the Scottish army, led by the king, and composed of the flower of Scottish chivalry, and the French auxiliaries whom Philip of Valois had sent over the sea with malicious intent.

So far, the warriors forming the king's division had borne their part bravely in the battle. But now their plight was perilous in the extreme; for the withdrawal of the High Steward had left them fearfully exposed, and Baliol, with his hereditary and personal antipathy to the house of Bruce revived by the excitement and carnage of the day, wheeling round, charged the main body of the Scots on the flank with such force that French auxiliaries and Scottish chivalry gave way, and the battalion, shaken to its centre, reeled, divided, and broke into confused fragments; while high above the din sounded the warcries of Neville and Hastings, and over the field rang shouts of "St. George and victory! Strike for King Edward!"

By this time the position of David Bruce was desperate; for the rear of his army, under Lord Douglas and the Earl of Moray, fiercely attacked by Moubray and Rokeby, and confined by hedges and fences, was precluded from escape, and utterly routed. At the time, therefore, that the King of Scots found himself worsted by Baliol, and looked around for aid, the High Steward had disappeared from the field; Douglas was a prisoner; and Moray a corpse.

The royal Scot was perplexed in the extreme. But let me do the unhappy king justice. No craven fear was in the heart of the son of Bruce as, in the hour of despair, he gathered around him the remnants of his host, and made a last struggle with his victorious adversaries. Forming his remaining troops into a circle, he faced his foes with a courage worthy of his birth, and, disdaining the thought of surrender, fought no longer for victory, no longer even for life, but for a death that would admit his name to a place in the roll of heroes.

But the aspirations of the King of Scots after a warrior's grave were not to be gratified. His doom was not to die that day. He was not to escape the fate he had defied.

It was about the hour of noon; and I, having done what in me lay to render complete the triumph of that day, was riding over the field, strewn with corpses and slippery with gore, when, on reaching Merrington, my attention was attracted to a spot where around a warrior on horseback, fighting desperately against a multitude, a conflict still raged. It was the King of Scots making his last futile efforts to avoid captivity.

Already he had been wounded in two places; his sword had been beaten from his hand, when an arrow brought him to the ground. As he regained his feet, Copeland, who was on the watch, sprang from his charger.

"Yield, sir king—rescue or no rescue," said the Northumbrian.

"Never," answered the royal Scot; "I will rather die than surrender."

"Nay," urged Copeland, "you have done all that a brave man could."

"Varlet!" exclaimed the king, turning fiercely upon Copeland, "it is not for such as you to judge what a king ought to do in the hour of despair."

And, as he spoke, he raised his gauntleted hand, and struck the Northumbrian in the mouth with such force that two of a set of teeth which were none of the most fragile were broken by the blow.

"Now, by St. John of Beverley!" cried Copeland, "were you the foremost king in Christendom, I should not longer brook delay to indulge your humour."

And throwing himself upon the royal Scot, the Northumbrian grasped his vanquished foe with a hand of iron.

"Now yield," said he sternly.

"I do yield, since with me it may not better be," answered the king; "but I swear to you, by my father's soul, that I would rather die by your hand."

"Tush, sir king," said Copeland compassionately; "you will think otherwise on the morrow. Life has its sweets."

"Not with hope and liberty gone," said the royal prisoner. "But conduct me to your queen."

"Sire," said Copeland, "you are my prisoner as much as if I were prince or peer, and I will conduct you where

I think proper, and to no other place, save at the command of King Edward, my lord."

Copeland now summoned his men, and, having mounted the Scottish king on one horse, was about to spring on another when I accosted him.

"Whither," asked I, "are you carrying your captive?"

"Boy," answered Copeland significantly, "I believe that is a secret your tongue will be all the less likely to tell if not committed to your ears. Adieu!"

"But what will the queen say?"

"I know not; but this I do know, that I will answer for his safe keeping to my lord, King Edward, and to no other person, man or woman."

CHAPTER XXIX

ROYALTY IN A RAGE

GREAT, as may be supposed, was the anxiety, and great was the consternation, which pervaded the town of Durham, and extended along the banks of the winding Wear, on that day when the battle of "Neville's Cross" was fought at the Red Hills.

From the hour at which Philippa mounted her white palfrey, and rode towards the Park of Auckland, monks, and merchants, and women were equally agitated. The monks who had not accompanied the prior to kneel around the corporax cloth of St. Cuthbert ascended the highest towers of the cathedral, and, with eyes strained towards the embattled hosts, sang hymns, and prayed earnestly that the patrimony of their patron saint might be saved; merchants crowded the house-tops, or paraded the streets, and excitedly lamented the danger to which their families, and booths, and wares were exposed; and women wrung their hands, and bewailed their prospective fate if the town was sacked, and they themselves delivered over to the mercy of foes who, at other places, had proved that they knew nothing of mercy—perhaps not even the name.

It was an awful crisis, as every one felt; and not even

the oldest inhabitant could remember such a display of anxiety and dread in a town which was supposed to be guarded by a patron saint of marvellous potency.

At length the danger passed; and when it became known that the conflict, maintained for hours with fury, had terminated in the rout of the invading host, the joy and thankfulness were not less conspicuous than the dismay and consternation had been. Shouts of triumph were on every tongue; and everybody was eager to express gratitude to Heaven for deliverance from those evils that fall to the lot of the vanquished. Nor was any time lost in giving formal expression to the sentiments which filled all hearts. When I, after the memorable scene in which John Copeland enacted so prominent a part, rode into the town, I found that the Lords Neville and Percy and the other war-chiefs—with the exception of Ralph, Lord Hastings, slain on the field—had attended the queen and the prelates to the cathedral, and were, in that sacred edifice, rendering thanks to God and St. Cuthbert for the great victory that had been vouchsafed to their arms.

The religious ceremony having been performed with an earnestness which the circumstances were eminently calculated to inspire, Philippa and the Lords of the North returned in procession to the castle. While there endeavouring to estimate the extent of their victory, and while ascertaining the number and rank of the prisoners, many and grave were the inquiries made by the queen and her captains as to the fate of the King of Scots.

Now it happened that I was the only person capable of affording information on this very important subject; and, albeit not without apprehensions that the consequences of carrying off such a captive with so little ceremony might prove somewhat awkward to Copeland, I felt and deemed it a duty to speak the truth plainly. Having, therefore, intimated that I could throw light on the point as to which so much curiosity was manifested, I was conducted to the hall in which the council was held, and, approaching the queen, bent my knee, not, as I flattered myself, without some of the grace which I had often marked and admired in the castle of Windsor.

“Rise, page,” said Philippa gravely, “and, whatever you have to say, say briefly.”

“Madam,” began I simply, “what I saw with my own eyes that only I wish to relate.”

‘Proceed.’

“Having followed the chase as far as the rising ground which, I since learn, goes by the name of Merrington, I there came upon a party who were preventing the King of Scots from making his escape; and there I myself saw the said king surrender to John Copeland, whom I know to be an esquire of Northumberland, and I believe a stout and valiant man in war.”

“His name is not unknown to me,” said the queen. “But wherefore conducts he not the captive to our presence?”

“Gracious lady,” replied I, much confused, “it irks me to say aught ungrateful to your ears; but since it would ill become me to conceal the truth, I am under the necessity of adding that I saw John Copeland not only take the King of Scots prisoner, but ride off with him from Merrington.”

“And whither?”

“Madam, I know not,” replied I, driven to desperation; “and albeit it would ill beseem me to answer for another, nevertheless, I cannot but deem that this squire means naught disloyal; for, on putting the question, he only answered that he would keep his captive safe, and account for him to our lord the king.”

Not before could I have believed Philippa capable of so much wrath as she displayed on hearing this. Never, in truth, had the eye of living man seen the excellent queen in such a rage. All the fire of her ancestors seemed to burn within her at that moment; and, though she did not stamp her foot, or clench her hand, or express her indignation in loud exclamations, her bent brow and flashing eye sufficiently attested the ire which Copeland’s conduct had kindled in a bosom seldom agitated with angry emotions. Recovering, in some degree, her serenity, but with her countenance still flushed with offended pride, she turned towards the lords, and, looking round the circle—which did not fail to sympathise with what she

regarded as an insult to her dignity as the Queen of England, and the heroine of the day—she seemed to appeal to them for aid to vindicate her privileges.

“Madam,” said Lord Percy, in reply to her look, “have patience for a brief space, and this matter shall be set to rights.”

“Yes,” added Lord Neville, “Copeland is rude and headstrong; but he is a right loyal squire, who, in his day, hath done England good service, and cannot but mean well.”

“May it so prove, my lords,” said the queen recovering her equanimity; “I will exercise what patience I can. Meantime, be it yours to take measures for ascertaining whither he has carried the King of Scots; and I will, with my own hand, write a letter commanding him to bring the King of Scots to me at York, and telling him that he will disobey me at his peril—for he has not done what is agreeable to me in carrying off his prisoner without leave, and that he will have to explain his conduct fully ere he can hope for my pardon.”

“Madam,” replied Lord Percy, “what you command shall be done without loss of time; and I much mistake my merry men if, used as they are to track foes, they put your grace’s patience to a long test.”

“And,” added Lord Neville earnestly, “I entreat your grace to suspend judgment as to Copeland’s conduct, for well I know him to be leal and true, and could even take upon myself to be his warranty for explaining everything to your satisfaction.”

With this the conference came to a close; and the lords moved off to celebrate their victory, and make preparations for disbanding the army that had saved England in the day of need. At a later hour I was summoned to the queen’s presence, and went, not without a feeling of alarm that I might, in some measure, be involved in Copeland’s disgrace. I soon found, however, that my alarm was groundless, and that I was not to be punished for the rash imprudence of another.

“Page,” said Philippa as I entered, “I have sent for you to say that I hold you have done good service in informing me of the outrage of which this Northern squire

has been guilty ; and I doubt not but that my lord the king will so account it. Nay, answer not, but listen. At daybreak, Sir John Neville, son of the lord of that name, sets forth to journey to Calais, to carry thither news of the victory which has this day been sent us by God and St. George. It is but right that my lord the king should have all information as to the manner in which a royal prisoner was taken and lawlessly carried off. Be ready, therefore, to join Sir John Neville's train and accompany him when he takes the road."

With the best grace I could, I expressed my deep sense of the honour which the queen was pleased to confer upon me ; and next morning, about cock-crow, I was riding out of Durham with Neville and his men, and, in their company, taking the way south to embark at Dover for the stronghold before the walls of which lay, in hostile array, the gallant prince whom I had the distinction of serving and the brave warriors at whose side I had fought at Cressy.

It was true that, in thus leaving England, I was deprived of the opportunity of visiting my grandsire's homestead, and this somewhat damped the joy which I felt at the prospect of figuring once more in the prince's train. But I was young, and too sanguine to dwell long on a subject which was rather suggestive of melancholy reflections.

"What matters it," soliloquised I, as I rode along, "whether I appear there now or hereafter? Mayhap the delay is favourable ; and when the time does come, I may have won some more significant symbol of renown in arms than aught that decks a page's livery to gladden the heart of my stout grandsire, and to cheer, if but for a moment, the heart of my sad, sad mother."

Little, as I thus mused, did I foresee the awfully painful circumstances under which I was destined next to approach the homely grange, and set foot in the humble hall whose roof had sheltered my childhood.

CHAPTER XXX

AT CALAIS

I MUST now ask the reader to waft himself in imagination from Durham to Calais—to suppose that Sir John Neville and Arthur Winram have taken shipping at Dover, and landed near the camp of the besiegers—and that, while the knight has, without the loss of a moment, proceeded to the tent of the king, the page has repaired to that of the prince, to account for his prolonged absence from duty, and to tell of the wondrous things which, in the interval, he has seen and done.

At the door of the pavilion, over which floated the young hero's standard, I encountered Sir Thomas Norwich, who eyed me with a start of surprise.

"What, page!" exclaimed he; "where, in the name of all the saints, have you been?"

"It is a long story."

"Ah! I see. You have been indulging in some more such mysterious adventures as you had at Caen."

"Yes, sir knight," replied I, shaking my head wisely, "such adventures, and so many, that I would fain, with your permission, see my lord the prince to recount them for his diversion."

"A murrain upon you, boy!" exclaimed Sir Thomas, frowning. "Deem you that my lord has so little to think of, that he can find time to listen to your talk about trifles?"

"Lead me to my lord's presence," said I, in a conclusive tone, "and I will stake my head on my intelligence proving of moment enough to secure me an audience."

The air of mystery which I assumed was not lost on the good knight; in fact, I believe his curiosity was highly excited. In any case, without more ado, he drew aside the curtain of the pavilion, and I speedily found myself in the presence of the heir of England.

At that time the Prince of Wales, who was buoyant with all the enthusiasm of youth, and dreaming constantly

of the feats of arms performed in other days by paladins and heroes of romance, and not without an ardent ambition to emulate their achievements, was somewhat weary of the inaction of a siege which, being slowly and cautiously conducted, furnished no opportunity of performing the daring deeds in which his soul delighted. Naturally, therefore, anything that gave novelty to the scene was acceptable. As I entered, he was listening to Sir William Pakington, his secretary, who, for his amusement, read aloud from the book called "Tristrem"; and the glance of surprise which his countenance wore as he turned towards me was accompanied with an expression which seemed to intimate that I was welcome.

"Wonder upon wonders!" exclaimed he; "can this be my page Winram—Arthur Winram?"

"The same, my lord, and at your highness's command."

"Methought you had fallen in the battle," said the prince, smiling; "or beshrew me if, at one time, I did not fancy that, like your famous namesake, King Arthur, you had been carried away to Elfland by the faëry queen."

"No, my lord; Elfland may, for aught I know, be a pleasant abode for such as have the fortune to get there; but I have not been beyond the haunts of living men."

I then rapidly related the adventures of which I had been the hero from the time at which the young Count of Flanders had been rescued from my grasp by Philip of Valois, while flying from Cressy, to the hour when the King of Scots had been taken prisoner by John Copeland, while flying from Neville's Cross. The prince listened with attention, now and then putting a question to make me explain events more fully; and when my narrative came to an end, he rose, and for a few moments paced the floor of the pavilion in a reflecting mood.

"By good St. George!" exclaimed he, stopping suddenly, "this news of the defeat of the Scots comes in good time to scare the blood out of Philip's body, and to encourage my lord the king to take this place by storm before the winter sets in. It seems," con-

tinued he, "that when this Scottish invasion was bruited about, his holiness the Pope remarked that 'the Scots were the only antidote to the English.' I marvel what he will say now. Two such victories against such odds, and in so many months!" he added, "surely neither history nor song tells of a nation so highly favoured in hours of peril."

"Not that I wot of, my lord," replied I, whose information on the subject was not by any means so extensive as to entitle me to speak with anything like authority.

"Nevertheless," said the prince earnestly, "would to God that you had taken young Louis of Flanders prisoner! There is no prince or lord in Christendom whom my lord the king more eagerly desires to bring over to the English interest; and the exploit would have made your fortune."

"My lord, I did my best," answered I calmly; "and, so long as we fought single-handed, I did not despair. But when so many adversaries appeared, I deemed that I was wise in saving my own life at the expense of a little rough handling to a man of his rank."

The prince laughed gaily, and was about to speak, when, at that moment, the curtain was drawn, and Lord De Ov entered. As he did so, we exchanged glances of mutual defiance; and my hand insensibly stole to the handle of my dagger.

"My lord, pardon my interrupting your conversation," said he, bowing to the prince; "and you, Master Winram, if that be your name," continued he, scowling on me, "you are commanded to repair to the king's tent, and report yourself to the page in waiting; and mayhap," continued he maliciously, as we issued from the pavilion, "you will be able to explain how it came to pass, when strict orders were issued before Cressy that no man should leave the ranks in pursuit, that you alone disobeyed the order."

"My lord," replied I haughtily, "I am prepared to explain all that to the king or the Prince of Wales, if I am questioned; but to you, or such as you, I cannot hold myself in any way responsible."

"Varlet!" cried he, boiling with rage, "but that you

are on your way to the king, I should chastise your insolence on the spot."

"Be patient, my lord," replied I, repressing my rising wrath with a stern effort, "and the day will come when you will have no such excuse. Ay—mark me!—the day will surely come."

As I spoke, we parted; and while he stood gazing on me with a face in which antipathy, to the strongest degree, was expressed in the bitterest manner, I pursued my way with an air of calm defiance.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE LUCK OF JOHN COPELAND

It was not merely to the king and the Prince of Wales, and the nobles and knights of England, that the news of Queen Philippa's victory was a subject of high interest. Every squire, page, and groom, heard the glad tidings with delight; and as rumour carried through the English camp intelligence so flattering to the pride of Englishmen, there arose one long shout of joy and rejoicing. For my own part, I had to tell the story hundreds of times, and, for twenty-four hours at least, found myself a person of no slight consequence.

I know not what the Calesians thought of the excitement among the besiegers; but the cheers that everywhere rose loud and high might have intimated to them that the English had received news that boded little good to the beleaguered town. Nevertheless, they held out resolutely; and, in spite of the prince's prediction, King Edward evinced no inclination whatever to storm the place.

"No," said the king in a conclusive tone; "I now feel more secure than ever of my prize. It is true that Philip of Valois may come to relieve the place; and, truth to tell, I desire not mine adversary's presence. But, if come he does, it shall be at his peril."

However, Philip of Valois made no sign of moving to the rescue of his friends. In fact, it seemed that the ill-fated prince had played his last card when he urged the

King of Scots to invade England; and the disastrous issue of the enterprise had ruined his projects.

In such circumstances, it appeared that, if distress did not force the Calesians to surrender their stronghold, the English army might remain all the winter before the walls without any change in the aspect of affairs. Such being the case, the pledge I had given not to draw my sword for a year and a day became less irksome; and I was gradually reconciling my mind to the condition on which I had recovered my liberty, when, towards the coast in the neighbourhood of Calais, the wind blew a ship on board of which was no less important a personage than John Copeland, the captor of David Bruce.

And here I must pause to relate how the Northumbrian squire, after possessing himself of the King of Scots, at the cost of two of his front teeth, at Merrington, and mounted him on horseback, fared with his royal captive; and how his sagacity enabled him, without losing hold of his prisoner, to evade the consequences of having aroused Queen Philippa's wrath to the highest pitch.

No sooner had Sir John Neville reached the camp before Calais, and presented Philippa's epistle to her royal husband, than, as I have already intimated, I was interrupted in my colloquy with the prince, and by Lord De Ov hastily and not very courteously summoned to the royal presence, and closely interrogated as to the circumstances under which the King of the Scots was taken prisoner and carried northward. I told my story without concealment or exaggeration, and was gratified to perceive that King Edward, albeit blaming Copeland for having been rash, gave him credit for having acted with honourable intentions.

But, unhappily, the aspect of the affair did not improve with time. In fact, Copeland seemed bent on ruining himself by carrying his enterprise too far.

It appeared, on inquiry, that, after capturing David Bruce, Copeland hurried him away towards the castle of Ogle, on the river Blythe, and, after reaching that fortress, placed him under a guard so strong as to preclude the probability of escape or rescue. So far the matter was not so awkward. But when a knight, despatched by the

queen, presented a letter, in which he was commanded to give up his captive, he answered in defiant terms.

"The King of Scots," said he to the knight, "is my prisoner, and I will neither give him up to man nor woman, except to my own lord, the King of England. But," added he, "you may depend on my taking proper care of him, and I will be answerable for guarding him well."

Naturally such a message exasperated Philippa beyond measure; and, in high wrath, she wrote to King Edward, complaining that Copeland had acted so outrageously, and set her commands so utterly at defiance, that she could not brook his insolence.

The king was somewhat perplexed. Sympathising, in a slight degree, with the queen's indignation, but reluctant to act severely towards Copeland, he perhaps felt some hesitation as to what he should do. It was necessary, however, to decide without delay; and the king deemed it most prudent to send orders to Copeland to repair forthwith to Calais. The squire hastened to obey; and, having left David Bruce vigilantly guarded in his castle of Ogle, ere long presented himself at Calais, and, having desired to be conducted to the king, soon found himself face to face with the husband of the royal lady whose resentment he had provoked.

It was a memorable moment when Copeland and the king met, and for an instant the squire's brave heart must have beat quick as he looked on his sovereign's countenance; but Edward's manner was sufficiently gracious to assure him that he had lost but little favour, and that he was not likely to meet with strong reproof.

"Ah, welcome!" exclaimed the king; "welcome, my brave squire, who, by his valour, has captured my adversary, the King of Scots!"

At this point, Copeland, perceiving how the interview would probably terminate, fell on his knees.

"My lord," said he gravely, "if God, in His great kindness, has given me the King of Scots as a prisoner—having permitted me to conquer him in arms—no one ought to be jealous of it, for God can, when He pleases, send His grace to a poor squire as well as to a great lord."

"Go on, John," said the king in a tone of encouragement; "I listen."

"Well, my lord," continued the squire more boldly, "do not take it amiss if I did not surrender the King of Scots to the orders of my lady the queen; for I hold my lands of you, and my oath is to you, not to her, except it be through choice."

"Rise, John," said the king, after musing for a moment, "and assure yourself that the loyal service you have done us, and our esteem for your valour, are so great as to serve for an excuse, were any needed; and shame fall upon those who bear you an ill-will. However, you will now return home, and take your prisoner, the King of the Scots, and convey him to my wife."

"Right willingly, my lord," replied Copeland, who saw that everything would end as he wished.

"And, by way of remuneration," added the king, coming to the point, "I assign lands, as near your house as you can choose them, to the value of five hundred pounds sterling a-year, for you and your heirs, and I nominate you a squire of my body and household."

"My lord, how can I express my thanks for your favours?" cried the squire in ecstasies.

"As for that," said Edward, "seeing that you are a brave warrior, I ask you to furnish twenty men-at-arms; and, on that condition, I grant you a pension of a hundred pounds yearly, to be paid out of the customs of Berwick."

* * * * *

It was on the third day after his arrival at the camp before Calais, and when he was about to embark to return to England, that Copeland sought me out to say "Farewell."

"Well, sir squire," said I, laughing, "it seems that, after great hazard, you have managed everything to your heart's content."

"Assuredly," replied he. "I ever predicted that such would be the issue; and now nothing remains to be done in the business but to return home, assemble my friends and neighbours, and convey the captive king to York,

with some such excuse to my lady the queen as will soothe her woman's pride."

"So far," observed I, "you certainly have had luck on your side."

"Ay, boy," said he, smiling grimly, "you now see I understand better than you how to get fame and fortune."

"God's truth!" exclaimed I, "after what has passed I should be a dolt to dispute it. But all men have their peculiar gifts; and I opine that it is only a man born and bred in the north who could have planned such an achievement, and carried it out so shrewdly."

"Well spoken, my brave youth," said Copeland; "and I believe you likewise have gifts that might make a man of you, if you went the right way about it; but trust me that all your fine dreams of chivalry and ambition to perform fine feats of arms will not easily get you five hundred a-year in land, and a pension of a hundred a-year out of the customs of Berwick."

"Perhaps, not; but my dreams, as you call them, may result in something better—in my name being recorded by chroniclers, and celebrated by minstrels."

The Northumbrian squire laughed loud at what he deemed my fantastic notions, and laid his hand on my arm.

"Hark ye, boy," said he, looking in my face. "I know something of mankind, and I venture to predict of you, that—young and foolish as you are—you will live and learn how to climb the tree, so as ever, when you fall, to fall as a cat does—that is, on your feet; so that I have faith in your future."

"Many thanks for your compliment," said I, half scornfully.

"But listen," continued Copeland kindly. "When this siege is over, and you tire of idling at Windsor or Eltham, and sigh for strife and real warfare, come north to my castle on the Blythe; and, if you meet not with dainty chivalry, you will meet with a hearty welcome, and enemies who will give you work to do, when we mount our steeds, and ride forth together to couch our spears against the Scot."

“Many thanks for your courtesy,” replied I, as he shook my hand ere parting; “and, if I avail myself of your offer, I trust you will not fail to put me in the way of making my fortune by capturing a king.”

CHAPTER XXXII

ARRIVALS

ABOUT three days before the Feast of All Saints there was much commotion in the camp before Calais. Everything wore a gayer aspect than on ordinary occasions, and an unwonted degree of excitement lighted up the grim faces of the English soldiery. In fact, there had just taken place an important arrival in the person of Queen Philippa; and, even had she come alone, the heroine of Neville's Cross would have been received with enthusiasm. But she was not unaccompanied when she came to Calais; for with her came a great number of ladies, who gladly left England and their homes to see their fathers, husbands, brothers, and kinsmen who were engaged in the siege.

It appears that, so far as the King of Scots was concerned, everything had ultimately been settled to Philippa's satisfaction. On reaching England, Copeland, as he had intended, assembled his friends and neighbours, conducted David Bruce to York, and there, in the king's name, presented his royal captive to the queen with such handsome excuses, that she expressed herself quite satisfied. Nor, after having settled that matter, did Philippa linger in the North. Having provided for the defence of York, Durham, and other towns in the province beyond the Humber, she immediately set out for London, carrying the royal Scot in her train.

Arrived in the capital of England, the King of Scots was, with much ceremony, conducted to the Tower. Twenty thousand soldiers escorted the prisoner; the companies of the city, in their appropriate dresses, took part in the procession; and David Bruce—riding a tall black

horse, that he might be seen of all men—slowly passed through London, and disappeared from the crowd within the gate of the great metropolitan fortress.

Measures having been taken to render the prison absolutely secure, and to preclude everything like a possibility of escape, Philippa left London for Dover; and, embarking with a favourable wind, she soon reached Calais. On the arrival of the queen, King Edward held a grand court and ordered magnificent entertainments for the ladies who had come with his royal spouse.

Naturally, the court and the entertainments caused much talk, raised much curiosity, and excited much interest in the camp. But they were not the only subjects of conversation which Philippa's arrival furnished. From England with the queen came her eldest daughter, Isabel, then a girl of fifteen, and fair to look upon; and everybody whispered that she was destined as the bride of the Count of Flanders. At all events, it was known that the Flemings were most anxious that their young count should espouse the English princess; and it was believed that the King and Queen of England were, for many reasons, as eager as the Flemings that the match should take place.

At that time I may mention that the Count of Flanders was still at the court of Philip of Valois, brooding over the death of his father, and dreaming of vengeance. The Flemings, however, were not daunted by this circumstance, which certainly did not favour this project. To the French court they sent such messages as they believed would lure their prince home.

"If," said they, "you will return to Flanders, and follow our advice, we will make a great man of you."

The young count listened, reflected, yielded, and returned to the dominions over which his father had exercised sovereign sway.

At first everything went smoothly enough. The chief towns of Flanders made much of their count, and laid such rich presents at his feet that his eyes were dazzled, and so far all was well. But on one point they were determined—namely, that they—and not he—should select his bride, and that the bride should be none

other than the English princess who was now, with her mother, in the camp before Calais.

Unfortunately, as it happened, the Count of Flanders had two strong objections to the matrimonial union which his subjects were so anxious to bring about. In the first place, he wished to marry a daughter of the Duke of Brabant; and, in the second place, he was utterly averse to marry Isabel of England.

"I will never," said he, almost in tears—"I will never marry a daughter of the man whom I hold responsible for my father's death."

"But," said the Flemings, "this English alliance will best enable us to resist the oppressions of the French, and our connexion with England is much more profitable than could be a connexion with any other country."

Nevertheless, the Count of Flanders remained obdurate; and the Flemings, equally stubborn in their way, not only adhered to their purpose, but gave their hereditary ruler to understand that he was neither more nor less than a prisoner—nay, more, they intimated that he was likely so to continue until he listened to reason, and consented to be guided by them.

"You will never," said they, "have your liberty, unless you take our advice; and if your father had taken our advice he might have been one of the greatest princes of Christendom, instead of being—what he became—a vassal of France."

Naturally, the count found his position extremely perplexing, and his captivity wearisome, and, under the influence of continual importunities on the part of the Flemings, his resolution began to give way.

"Well," said he, one day, "I begin to think you are in the right, and that the advantages to be gained from an alliance with England are very great."

Gratified to hear the count express himself in such language, the Flemings relaxed his bonds, gave him a little more liberty, and allowed him to recreate himself with field sports, especially that of hawking, which was his favourite pastime. But he felt that he was still a prisoner. Whenever he rode out to fly his hawk, he found himself vigilantly guarded; and, ere long, to

relieve himself from a predicament which daily became more awkward, he consented to do all that the Flemings required of him, and, with the best grace he could assume, intimated his willingness to espouse the English princess, whose name he disliked, and whose face he had never seen.

And now, for a time, matters went on as favourably as the Flemings could have desired, and ambassadors were sent to Calais to inform the King and Queen of England that the count was ready to espouse the princess. Edward and Philippa were delighted beyond measure with the intelligence, and did not conceal their satisfaction.

“What good sort of people the Flemings are!” exclaimed they gratefully.

Meanwhile, the Earl of Northampton and the Earl of Arundel, having been sent into Flanders, made all arrangements in the most skilful manner. In vain the Duke of Brabant threw obstacles in the way, invoked the interference of Philip of Valois, and did everything in his power to put a stop to these negotiations. The Flemings were neither to be coaxed nor coerced from following their project; and at length it was agreed that a conference should take place between the King and Queen of England and the Count of Flanders, attended by the chief men of the country. Bergues St. Vinox was fixed upon as the place of meeting, and thither from Calais went the king and queen with a brilliant train and in great state, to take their prospective son-in-law by the hand.

On reaching the place appointed for their conference, the King and Queen of England found the Count of Flanders, who, with the leading men of the chief towns, had come with great pomp to bring the business to a conclusion. Courteous salutations having passed, King Edward took the count aside, and spoke to the boy of the death of his father at Cressy.

“As God shall help me,” said the king solemnly, “I never heard, on the day of the battle, that the Count of Flanders was among my foes, nor on the morrow that he had been there.”

With this assurance the young count appeared satisfied, and the subject of the marriage was, without delay, intro-

duced. No dispute arose; and, certain articles having been agreed on and sworn to, the Count of Flanders was formally betrothed to Isabel of England, and engaged to espouse her at an early date. The day, indeed, was put off till King Edward should have more leisure. But the king and the count separated apparently in high good-humour with each other, and no doubt was entertained that, at an early period, the marriage would be celebrated with a pomp and splendour becoming the rank of the parties.

It was while the king and queen were absent at this conference, that I, lounging listlessly about the camp, met Sir Thomas Norwich, with whom I had recently become as friendly and familiar as our different ages and ranks would admit of our being. Many a time the good knight had spoken jocularly of my encounter with the Count of Flanders, and now he resumed the subject, which, at the moment, was by no means the most agreeable in the world.

“Boy Winram,” said he, “you have been so far lucky in your career; but I fear me you will fall into the background, now that this count is coming to wed the king’s daughter.”

“By my hallidame!” replied I, “such is the thought that haunts me. But change of fortune seems to be the lot of human beings all over the world; and Fortune, who so frequently turns her wheel against princes and men of high rank, also condescends at times to play her tricks with those of lower degree. So I submit. But of one thing, sir knight, connected with this affair, I feel fully assured.”

“What?”

“That Louis of Flanders has a French heart, and that he will never take the hand of an English bride with hearty good-will.”

“Dangerous words, which you had better not repeat,” said Sir Thomas, looking cautiously round.

“Mayhap they are dangerous words,” replied I; “but look to the end, and you may see them come true.”

CHAPTER XXXIII

NO ROAD

AUTUMN deepened into winter, and winter was succeeded by spring; and spring ripened and mellowed into summer, with its long, bright, merry days: and every month rumour brought to the camp of the English before Calais tidings that Philip of Valois was coming with a mighty army to relieve the beleaguered town. But month followed month, and season succeeded to season, and still Philip failed to make his appearance; and the warriors of England, growing somewhat vain-glorious, exclaimed with sneers that "hawks come not where eagles hold eyrie;" and the Calesians, on the verge of famine, well-nigh gave way to despair, when suddenly, on a summer day, news reached the camp that the foe, so long looked for, was at last coming, with princes, dukes, and counts, and an overwhelming force at his back, to save Calais and avenge Cressy.

It was a little before Whitsuntide, when Philip of Valois, having summoned all the knights and squires of France to assemble at Amiens, repaired to that city with his sons, the Dukes of Normandy and Orleans, held a grand council of war, and, after much deliberation, resolved to march to the relief of Calais. But, with some vague idea of the difficulties to be encountered—for all his ideas of war were vague—he sent ambassadors to Flanders, and asked for part of his army a free passage through the Flemish territory, his object being to send troops by way of Gravelines, that they might reach Calais on that side, fight with the English and reinforce the garrison. But the Flemings, not to be tempted from their fidelity to the King of England, decidedly refused to comply with the request; and Philip, baffled as to this part of his project, determined to push forward his enterprise by advancing towards Boulogne.

At Arras, however, he took up his quarters for a short time to gather in the forces which were hastening to his standard; and from Arras he advanced slowly to Hesdin,

his army and baggage extending over three miles of country. Resting at Hesdin for a day, he moved forward to Blangy, and, having again halted at that place to mature his plans, he threw off hesitation, passed through the country of Faukenberg, and leading his men straight to Sangate, posted them on the hills, between Calais and Wissant.

It will readily be imagined that, at this time, the excitement in the camp of the English was high. Impressive, moreover, was the spectacle which the army of Philip presented to those who rode out to watch their movements. Night had fallen when the French took up their ground, and I can bear witness that it was a beautiful sight to see their banners waving and their arms glistening in the moonlight.

“A most noble army, my lord,” remarked Sir Thomas Norwich to the Prince of Wales, with whom and a body of riders he had come to view the approach of the foe.

“A most noble army on my faith!” replied the prince, with admiration. “But,” added he, after a pause, “it can avail Calais naught. The position of my lord the king is too strong to be attacked with advantage by mortal man, and Philip of Valois must either retire without striking a blow, or prove himself mad by rushing on destruction, and leading his followers like sheep to the slaughter.”

Nor, in speaking in a tone so confident, was the prince guilty of aught like presumption. Nothing, in truth, which skill, and prudence, and labour could do to render the English army absolutely secure, had been left undone by the English king. At the commencement of the siege there were two roads by which the French might have approached Calais. One of these was by the downs along the sea-shore, and the other by the bridge of Nieullet, which afforded a passage over the marshes and ditches further up the country. But neither one nor the other had been neglected. Along the shore Edward posted his fleet, with archers, and artillery, and bombardards, the noise of which frightened the enemy; and at the bridge of Nieullet he posted his cousin, the Earl

of Derby, with such a force of archers and men-at-arms as were likely to keep it against all comers.

Not wholly informed as to the position of the English or perhaps, when at a distance, contemptuous of their power, Philip of Valois, while encamped at Sangate, sent his marshals to examine the country, and ascertain the most favourable passage towards the foes whom he came to crush; but they returned, with dismay in their faces, to inform him that no attempt could be made without the certainty of an infinite loss of men.

“But,” cried Philip, after hearing them, “why not cross the marshes between Sangate and the sea?”

“Because, sire,” answered the marshals firmly, “the marshes are known to be impassable, and the idea is not seriously to be entertained.”

“Well,” exclaimed Philip angrily, “by St. Denis! it seems that I cannot get to my adversary the King of England, but that is no reason why he should not come to me.”

And, after pondering for a day and a night, he commanded four of his lords, one of whom was Eustace de Ribeaumont, to go to King Edward and challenge him to leave his camp, and fight on the hill of Sangate.

According to their instructions, the four lords mounted their steeds, passed the bridge of Nieullet, and, on reaching the English camp, found the king surrounded by his barons and knights. Dismounting, they approached, with many reverences, and stood before the king.

“Gentlemen,” said Edward, smiling, “ye are welcome. Pray tell me what is your errand, for I would fain know at once.”

“Sire,” said Eustace de Ribeaumont, speaking for all, “the King of France informs you, through us, that he is come to the hill of Sangate in order to give you battle, but he cannot find any means of approaching you.”

Edward looked round on his barons and knights, and, as he did so, he smiled complacently.

“Therefore,” continued Ribeaumont, “the King of France wishes you to assemble your council, and he will send some of his, that they may confer together, and fix on some spot where a general combat may take place.”

“Gentlemen,” said Edward dryly, “I have already taken counsel with my barons and knights, and my answer to the demand of Philip of Valois is brief. I perfectly understand the request made, through you, by my adversary, who wrongfully keeps possession of my inheritance, which, be it known to you, weighs much upon me. You will, therefore, tell him from me, if you please, that I have been on this spot near a twelvemonth. Of this, I am assured, he was well informed; and, had he chosen, he might have come here sooner. But, God’s truth! he has allowed me to remain so long that I have expended large sums of money, and have done so much that I must be master of Calais in a very short time. I am not, therefore, inclined in the smallest degree to comply with his caprices, or to gratify his convenience, or to abandon what I have gained, or what I have been so anxious to conquer. If neither he nor his army can pass by the downs nor by the bridge, he must seek out some other road. I am not bound to find him a way.”

The French lords bowed low on receiving King Edward’s answer, and, having mounted their horses, were courteously escorted to the bridge of Nieullet, and sent on to their own camp. On reaching Sangate they related to Philip of Valois the result of their mission, and gave such an account of the formidable preparations made to oppose them, that the bold countenance of the Valois fell.

“By heavens!” exclaimed he, gesticulating violently, “this passes all patience; but, one day, I will make mine adversaries dearly rue all they are doing.”

Having uttered his threat, which the unhappy man was not destined to execute, Philip acknowledged the impossibility of any successful attempt to raise the siege of Calais, and forced himself to the determination of abandoning the enterprise which had created so much stir throughout France. Breaking up his camp, he marched, much crestfallen, from Sangate, and away in the direction of Amiens, there to disband his army. But the English were not inclined to let him off so easily. Attacking the rear of the retreating force, they wrought the French much mischief, and brought off

prisoners, horses, and waggons full of wine and other provisions.

Meanwhile, the Calesians were in the last stages of distress, and when they saw Philip depart, leaving them to their fate, they uttered a long wail, expressive of horror and grief. It was, indeed, abundantly evident that all hope of succour had vanished, and, at the instance of the despairing inhabitants, John de Vienne, governor of the town, mounted the walls, and, displaying a flag, made a signal that he demanded a parley.

“Now,” said King Edward joyfully, “the fruit is at length ripe, and the wind is about to do its work.”

And he ordered Sir Walter Manny to hold a parley with the French governor.

CHAPTER XXXIV

SURRENDER OF CALAIS

It was the morning of the 3rd of August, 1347; and there was woe and lamentation within the walls of Calais. After having held out sternly for well-nigh a year, the town, left to its fate by Philip of Valois, already exposed to some of the horrors of famine, and now almost at the mercy of the King of England, was on the point of surrendering to the besiegers, and under such circumstances as made the necessity appear all the more cruel.

In fact, the parley which John de Vienne, the governor, had demanded, and which he had held in the usual form with Sir Walter Manny, had not resulted as anticipated by the Calesians; for King Edward insisted on an unconditional surrender, and, at first, would listen to no other terms. In vain Sir Walter Manny and the nobles of England pleaded for the unfortunate town. The only condition to which Edward would consent was one which added to the melancholy of the occasion, and melted the sternest hearts.

“Gentlemen,” said Edward in a conclusive tone, “I am not so obstinate as to hold my opinion against you all.”

Every eye sparkled with satisfaction, as the idea that the king was about to yield to their wishes, occurred to all.

“Sir Walter,” continued Edward dryly, “you will therefore inform the Governor of Calais that the only grace that he may expect from me is, that six of the principal citizens march out of the town with bare heads and feet, with ropes round their necks, and the keys of the town and castle in their hands. These six citizens shall be at my absolute disposal; the remainder of the inhabitants pardoned.”

When the decision at which the royal conqueror had arrived was made known to John de Vienne, he ordered the bell to be rung; and, having assembled all the men and women of Calais in the town hall, he informed them of the answer which he had received, and that he could not obtain any more favourable conditions. Mournful was the scene which ensued. Immediately the assembly raised the cry of despair; and the distress was so great that even the fortitude of John de Vienne gave way, and he wept bitterly. After a short pause, however, Eustace St. Pierre, one of the richest men in Calais, and one of the most virtuous, rose slowly, and with serene dignity addressed the populace.

“Gentlemen, both high and low,” said Eustace gravely, “it would be a very great pity to suffer so many people to die through famine, if any means could be found to prevent it; and it would be highly meritorious in the eyes of our Saviour if such misery could be averted.”

A low murmur of approbation ran through the assembly, and all present kept their eyes fixed on the countenance of the speaker.

“And such being the case,” continued Eustace, “and such faith have I in finding grace before God, if I die to save my townsmen, that I venture to name myself as one of the six.”

As may be supposed, a mighty effect was produced by this speech; and, as Eustace concluded, the populace were almost inclined to worship him. Many, indeed, cast themselves at his feet with tears and groans, and sought to kiss the hem of his garment. Nor was this example lost

on those who, like himself, had hitherto held their head highest in the now imperilled community. With little delay, and as little reluctance, five of the principal citizens rose, as Eustace had done, and volunteered, like him, to give themselves up for their fellow-townsmen, and if necessary, seal the sacrifice with their blood.

No time was now lost in bringing matters to a conclusion. Mounting a hackney, John de Vienne conducted the six citizens to the gate, and, having passed through, led them, barefoot and bare-headed, with halters round their necks, and the keys of Calais in their hands, to the barrier, and delivered them to Sir Walter Manny, who was there waiting.

“Sir knight,” said John de Vienne, “I, as Governor of Calais, deliver to you with the consent of the inhabitants, these six citizens; and I swear to you that they were, and are to this day, the most wealthy in Calais. I beg of you, gentle sir, that you would have the goodness to beseech your king that they may not be put to death.”

“On my faith,” replied Sir Walter, much affected, “I cannot answer for what the king will do with them; but you may depend on this, that I will do all in my power to save them.”

And now the barriers were opened, and Sir Walter Manny, leading the six citizens to the royal pavilion, presented them to the victor king.

Immediately on coming into Edward's presence, the six citizens fell on their knees, and, with uplifted hands, implored mercy.

“Most gallant king,” cried they, in accents that moved every heart, “see before you men of Calais, who have been capital merchants, and who bring you the keys of the castle and the town.”

All the lords and knights of England who surrounded their king on the occasion wept at the sight. At first, however, it seemed that the citizens were doomed. In fact, Edward greatly disliked the Calesians, not only for the blood and treasure they had cost him during the siege, but for the many injuries which, in other days, their cruisers had done the English at sea; and, far from sympathising with the pity expressed, he eyed them with angry

glances, and ordered them to be straightway led to execution. But loud murmurs arose from the barons who stood around; and one noble, bolder than the others, protested frankly. It was the young Lord Merley.

"My lord," said he, "reflect before doing in this matter what can never be undone, nor, as I believe, justified. Remember, my lord, what was said by your grandsire of illustrious memory, when advised to show mercy to men infinitely more criminal than these citizens. 'Why,' said he, 'talk to me of showing mercy? When did I ever refuse mercy to mortal man who asked it? I would not refuse mercy even to a dog!'"

Edward, however, shook his head, and appeared inexorable. But Sir Walter Manny, trusting to his influence, ventured on a last appeal.

"Gentle sir," said Sir Walter, "let me beseech you to restrain your anger. You have the reputation of great and true nobility of soul. Do not tarnish your reputation by such an act as this, nor allow any man to speak of you as having so tarnished it. All the world would say that you have acted cruelly if you put to death six men who have surrendered themselves to your mercy to save their fellow-citizens."

"Be it so," replied the king, with a significant wink, "and meantime let the headsman be sent for."

At that moment the fate of the citizens appeared to be sealed; and they must have given up all hope. But they had still another chance of escape. Almost as the king spoke, Queen Philippa approached, and, falling upon her knees, implored her husband to show mercy to the unhappy men.

"Ah, gentle sir," said the queen, with tears in her eyes, "since I, in spite of great dangers, have crossed the seas to meet you, I have never asked you one favour. Now I do most humbly ask, as a gift, for the sake of the Son of the Blessed Mary, and for your love of me, that you will be merciful to these six men."

For some time the king regarded his spouse without speaking, and as if struggling with himself. At length he broke silence, and, as he spoke, all present listened to his words, as if the life of each depended upon the answer.

"Lady," said he, "I wish that, at this moment, you had been anywhere else than here. But you have intreated in such a manner that I cannot refuse you. I therefore give these citizens to you to do as you like with them."

As the king concluded, all the nobles and knights breathed more freely; and the queen, having conducted the citizens to her apartments, caused their halters to be taken off, and clothes to be given to them, and ordered that they should be served with dinner; and then, having presented each with six nobles, she commanded that they should be safely and honourably escorted out of the camp.

Meanwhile Edward, now secure of his prize, turned to Sir Walter Manny and the two marshals, and handed them the keys which had been brought by the six citizens.

"Gentlemen," said he, "here are the keys of the town and castle of Calais. Go and take possession."

"And what of the governor and inhabitants?" asked they.

"As to them I will explain my views," replied the king. "You will first put into prison the governor and the knights whom you find there; and then all the other inhabitants you will send out of the town, and all soldiers who were serving for pay. I am resolved to repeople the town, and to people it with English, and none but English."

Forthwith, and right willingly, Sir Walter Manny and the marshals proceeded to execute the king's commands. With a hundred men they entered Calais, and took formal possession. John de Vienne and his knights having been taken into custody, arms of every sort were brought to the market-place, and piled up in a heap; and the inhabitants of all ages and sexes were ordered to leave the town, with the exception of an old priest and two other old men, who were well acquainted with the place and its customs and likely to be useful in pointing out the different properties.

At the same time, directions were given for preparing the castle to receive the King and Queen of England;

this done, Edward and Philippa mounted their steeds, and entered the gates in triumph. All were gay and exultant; trumpets and tabours sounded loudly; and the standard of England waved from tower and turret.

CHAPTER XXXV

A RUNAWAY BRIDEGROOM

WHILE the English were prosecuting the siege of Calais, and Philip of Valois was preparing to march, when too late, to relieve the town, and while King Edward was rendering his position too strong to be approached even by the boldest of foes, the match between the young Count of Flanders and the Lady Isabel of England continued to excite much interest, and to furnish material for many a dialogue. It was understood that the ideas of the Count of Flanders on the important subject of matrimony had undergone a total change, and that he had become not only reconciled to his fate, but all eagerness for the celebration of a marriage to which he had formerly expressed such a very decided aversion; and preparations were heartily made, on one side at least, for the great event which was to bind Flanders still more closely to her chief commercial ally. No expense was spared. The King of England provided rich gifts of cloths and jewels to distribute on the wedding-day, and the queen was similarly employed, as she was anxious to acquit herself on the occasion with honour and generosity.

In the meantime the Count of Flanders had returned to his own country, and at Ghent he was residing under the eye of his somewhat imperious subjects. But he was no longer a captive, nor even an object of jealousy. Not only had he done what they wished, but he talked in such a way as highly to gratify them. He professed to be much pleased at everything which, at their instance, he had done—pleased with the English match, and also with his prospective bride; and he declared that the alliance with England was perfectly agreeable to him, in such terms that they, believing all he said, refrained from

keeping any strict watch over him, and left him to pursue his sports without let or hindrance.

Now, as I have before said, the Count of Flanders was marvellously fond of hawking, and seldom allowed a day to pass without indulging in his favourite sport. With him it was not pursued merely as a recreation, as with most princes, but it was a passion. No one was surprised, therefore, when one day in the week in which he was to receive the hand of the English princess, he mounted his horse and fared forth, as usual, with a slight attendance, which was rather a train than a guard, and with a falconer by his side, each with a hawk on his wrist, made for the fields outside the city.

No sooner did the party enter the fields in search of game than a heron rose. The falconer immediately flew his hawk, and the count, having done likewise, pretended to be absorbed in calculating the probable result. Watching the birds attentively as they pursued their game, and shouting "Hoye ! hoye !" he followed them at a gallop till he was at some distance from his attendants, and deliberately put in execution a project he had formed for making his escape.

Fortunately for the count, not the slightest suspicion was entertained that he any longer felt discontented with his position, and his attendants ascribed his gallop to his ardour for hawking. No sooner, however, did he gain the open field, than he struck spurs into his horse, went off at a pace which set pursuit at defiance, and pursued his way without stopping till he reached the county of Artois, and knew that all danger of being captured was past.

But the Count of Flanders did not linger in Artois. Forward to the court of France, where his heart had ever been, went he joyfully, and chuckled with glee as he related to Philip of Valois all that had happened.

"You have acted wisely, cousin," said Philip. "As for your betrothal, heed it not. A forced contract is of no avail; and for the rest, I will ally you otherwise, and more to your honour and profit."

So spake Philip of Valois; but not so spake the warriors of England, when the Flemings, enraged and mortified,

came to Calais with tidings of their count's escape, and with befitting excuses to the English king.

"Shame upon the dog of a Fleming!" cried every one; "he has deceived and betrayed us."

"It is true," said the king, more calmly than might have been expected. "Nevertheless," added he, "we must not blame the Flemings, who are our friends; but we are bound to cultivate their friendship in spite of what has happened on this occasion; for what has happened has not been with their consent or connivance. On the contrary, they are much, and justly, enraged with their count's conduct."

And so King Edward accepted the excuses of the Flemings, and the matter ended; and, ere twelve months passed over, the Lady Isabel learned that her runaway bridegroom had espoused the daughter of the Duke of Brabant.

CHAPTER XXXVI

HOW CALAIS WAS REPEOPLED

MELANCHOLY, I must confess, it was on that memorable August day, even in the eyes of the conquerors of Calais, to see the citizens expelled from the homes which hitherto they had called their own, and compelled to wander forth, not knowing whither they went. Nor with them did they carry aught to aid them in forming new settlements. Everything they possessed was left behind; and, atoning for their fidelity to Philip of Valois by the loss of wealth and goods, as well as houses and heritage, men, women, and children, of various ages and conditions, passed, weeping, through the opened gates, to seek among strangers for new abodes and new friends.

All who witnessed their departure commiserated their hard fate. Even King Edward, albeit exasperated at the Calesians, must, in his heart, have deplored the stern necessity under the influence of which he acted. But, as I have said, the king had expressed his determination to repeople Calais with English, and so thoroughly was his mind made up on the subject, that nothing could have

turned him from the plan he had formed for securing his conquest to England, and making it advantageous to Englishmen.

In order to contribute to the result which he contemplated, the king gave to Sir Walter Manny and the Earl of Warwick, and other lords and knights, very handsome houses in Calais, that they might aid him in the work, and intimated his resolution to lose no time in doing his part.

“Immediately on reaching England,” said the king, “I will hasten to send hither a number of substantial citizens, with all their wealth, and exert myself in such a manner that the inhabitants shall be wholly English. Not even a dog not of English breed should remain in the city if I could help it.”

At the same time the king gave orders for dismantling the temporary town and fortifications which he had raised during the siege, and also the great castle which he had erected in the harbour. Having done this, and repaired the gates and walls, he took such measures for guarding the gates and defending the walls as he deemed essential to the security of the town, and then flattered himself that he had nothing more to fear.

“Nothing,” said he, “save treachery from within, could now deprive me of this town, which has cost me so much time and money to gain; and to provide at once against treachery, I intend to appoint as its governor a man in whose perception and fidelity I have full confidence.”

Accordingly, the king appointed to the important post of Governor of Calais a Lombard, named Aymery de Pavie, whom he had brought up from youth, whom he had greatly befriended, whom he had highly promoted, and who was destined to requite so many favours with the very blackest ingratitude.

It was a grave mistake on the king's part, I must admit, to appoint an avaricious Lombard to such a post; and he well-nigh atoned for his misplaced confidence by the loss of a conquest which he was so proud to have made, and which any king might have been proud to make. But in the meantime everything seemed fair, and Aymery de Pavie received the keys of Calais from the royal conqueror

with the air of a man who was incapable of thinking a dishonourable thought. However, there were then Englishmen and warriors of fame in Calais who had little faith in the Lombard's honesty, and who murmured that, in trusting a foreigner so much, the king was showing less than his wonted sagacity. None, however, ventured to speak, save in a whisper, on a subject so delicate, and not an echo of what was said ever reached the king's ears.

Meanwhile, many men—both English and French—were tired of the war, and talking about “peace;” and Pope Clement, in the exercise of his discretion, deemed it a fitting time to interfere. Before the surrender of Calais, indeed, and ere yet Philip of Valois had left the Calesians to their hard fate, the Pope had sent two cardinals to make an effort at negotiating a peace. But Edward would listen to no terms likely to interfere with his gaining possession of Calais; and the cardinals, after wasting three days in a fruitless attempt at negotiation, gave up the business in despair, and returned to Avignon.

But Clement did not abandon his design. No sooner, indeed, did the Pope learn that Edward had gained his object—in so far as Calais was concerned—than he resolved on renewing his attempt to terminate the war. With this object he sent into France, as his ambassador, the Cardinal Guy of Boulogne, who, meeting Philip of Valois at Amiens, exercised all his tact and skill to induce the vanquished prince to agree to a peace on practicable terms, and then appeared at Calais to try his powers of persuasion on the King of England.

At first the cardinal had not much reason to congratulate himself on the success of his negotiations. His mission, in fact, was one of great difficulty; for Philip hated Edward's name as death, and Edward's contempt for Philip was by no means so slight as to be easily concealed. But the cardinal comprehended his own position and theirs, and felt sure that he would succeed in the end.

And so, indeed, it came to pass. Both parties, after reflecting deliberately, arrived at the conclusion that, for the time being, at least, they had had enough of the war. The English were—as well they might be—contented

with the victories they had won, and anxious to return to their homes; the French, depressed and disheartened with defeat and disaster, were the reverse of eager to continue a struggle in which they instinctively felt they were almost certain to have the worst.

Such being the circumstances in his favour, the cardinal persevered, and, with so skilful a mediator as Guy of Boulogne whispering into their ears, both Philip of Valois and King Edward began gradually to listen more earnestly to his representations and his counsels.

At length the cardinal's endeavours were, in some degree, rewarded, and he had the gratification of bringing the rivals to consent to a truce for two years. On the 28th of September, 1347, the truce was signed with all due form, and the King and Queen of England, with the Prince of Wales and the Lady Isabel, embarked for England. The squires and pages of the prince prepared to follow more leisurely.

And on reaching England, where he met with a boisterous welcome, King Edward did not forget to neglect his scheme of repeopling Calais. Forthwith he adopted measures for putting it into execution. Thirty-six citizens of worth and substance, with their wives and families, were sent, in all haste, to inhabit the conquered town, and others speedily followed in large numbers, so that in manners, and customs, and language, Calais differed little from any town in England.

And, as time passed on, the temptation to cross the narrow seas became every year stronger. In fact, King Edward was all anxiety to see Calais prosper and grow rich under his rule; and he, to stimulate its trade, so multiplied the privileges of the English colonists, that adventurous Englishmen flocked eagerly to it as the place where, of all others in Europe, industry was best rewarded, and where fortunes were most easily gained.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A MYSTERIOUS VISIT

IT was the evening of Saturday, the 16th of October, 1347—the day preceding that which was the anniversary of the battle of Neville's Cross—and Calais was about to be left to the keeping of Aymery de Pavie and the garrison with which he had been furnished to guard the town against any attempt to recover it by force or stratagem.

Next day the squires and pages of the Prince of Wales were to embark; and I, by no means sorry to exchange the dulness of the conquered town for Westminster and Windsor, was seated, in solitude, in one of the chambers of the castle appropriated to the prince's household, reflecting on the events of a twelvemonth which, assuredly, had been somewhat eventful, and endeavouring, with juvenile enthusiasm, to anticipate what the coming year would bring forth, when I was suddenly aroused from my reverie by the sound of light footsteps, and, looking up with a start, I found that a woman of tall and elegant form was before me.

I rose mechanically, and, as in duty bound, bent my head with all the respect which an apprentice of chivalry owes to the sex which he has solemnly sworn to serve, and protect, and defend. But I did so with very peculiar feelings. In truth, though my visitor was closely veiled, I had an instinctive belief that the figure was not wholly unknown to me, and that it was associated with memories the reverse of agreeable. I had no time, however, to recall circumstances, or to speculate on probabilities, for, without delay, she raised her veil, and looked me full in the face; and, as she did so, I recognised, with astonishment, the woman whom I had seen on the night of my mysterious adventure at Caen.

I started again, and this time as if an adder had stung me; but I rapidly remembered the resolutions I had formed as to that memorable occasion; and, quickly recovering my serenity, I motioned her to a seat, resumed mine, and spoke first.

“Methinks, madam,” said I, in a significant tone, “we have met before.”

“It is true,” she replied, without evincing the slightest agitation. “But it is not of our having met that I would speak. So far as that meeting is concerned, let bygones be bygones, and let us speak of something of more importance to you—mayhap, also, to me. It is meet that you should know I have on my mind what deeply concerns you, and therefore am I here.”

“Gramercy for the interest you show in me, madam,” exclaimed I calmly. “I would fain hope, however, that what you have to say may be spoken without my drinking to strengthen my heart against failing during the narrative; for, on my faith, I cannot but deem that wine drunk in your presence becomes wondrously intoxicating.”

And I looked at my fair visitor with an air of superiority; for, in truth, I felt, at the moment, that I could not twice be deluded by the same person. Nevertheless, she was utterly unmoved, and, after a pause, resumed.

“A truce to jesting, young sir,” said she, “and listen to me with attention, for know that I am in possession of that secret which, of all others, you desire to gain possession of—I mean the secret of your birth.”

I felt my heart beat tumultuously, and my blood flow quicker through my veins, as she spoke; but, still remembering Caen, and resolved not to give way to excitement, I restrained myself, as I often in my day have done a too-eager steed, and answered calmly.

“Mayhap,” said I, “this secret is, after all, of small value; and to me—as you may suppose—it every day has become, and will become, of less value.”

“And wherefore, young sir?”

“It is in obscurity,” continued I, “that men ponder and most perplex themselves with such points, and rear castles in imagination. Now, in my case, life is all action and ambition. Boy as I am, I have placed my foot firmly on the ladder of life, and I neither fear to climb nor doubt my strength so to do; and what other inspiration does a man want than the consciousness of brave deeds and duties faithfully performed?”

“It is bravely spoken,” said she, without change of

tone or countenance; "and yet, could you guess all that my tongue could tell, you would not speak of the consequence so lightly."

"Now, by all the saints!" exclaimed I, losing patience, and with it all command of my temper, "wherefore, woman, tantalise me thus? If you know aught that relates to my birth—be it good or bad—speak, and I will listen; or, if you will not speak frankly, cease to tempt my curiosity with vague hints, which ever elude the grasp of my comprehension, as the rainbow eludes the grasp of the child."

"Be patient," said she, "and, in this far, I will explain. The secret, as I tell you, is in my possession, but as yet it is not mine to tell—it is another's. When my mother was on her death-bed, she committed it to me with her latest breath; but, as it concerns one greater than my mother, it cannot be told till Death has claimed that personage as his prey. Nay, interrupt me not," she continued, as my impatience was on the point of breaking forth in words; "when that event happens—and ere long it must happen—I will seek you out and find you, no matter whether you are in court, or camp, or even in prison; for I also have an interest in the truth being known, and more closely than you fancy are our fates linked together."

"You are mysterious," remarked I with a sneer, for I was greatly disappointed at the result of the communication; and, albeit my curiosity was sharpened, and my imagination excited, I recovered, outwardly at least, my calm demeanour.

"Ha!" exclaimed she, in a tone which indicated that she was offended at my sneer, "it seems that you are somewhat incredulous of my statement. Peradventure, you will give more credit to my words when I give you a token you cannot mistake. I tell you that a mark was set upon you in the cradle, which you are likely to carry to the grave."

I raised my head in silent curiosity.

"Yes," she continued, "it appears on your right shoulder, and is the form of a lion."

Now I could no longer doubt that this woman, whom I had met under circumstances which were assuredly not

calculated to give her a favourable place in my opinion, really knew something, more or less, of the tragedy connected with my birth, and, in some measure, had my fate in her hands; and the idea that my future, as it were, should be in any degree dependent on one who had conspired against my liberty, if not my life, was not only perplexing, but overwhelming. In my agitation, I rose and walked to the casement, hoping to calm my thoughts by looking out upon the clear October night. In this position I rapidly regained my equanimity, and that kind of mental energy which enables us to form resolutions.

“By St. George and St. Cuthbert, under whose patronage I have fought against my country’s foes,” I exclaimed, with a sudden gleam of hope, “this woman cannot be without a heart. I will appeal to her humanity to tell me as much, at least, of what relates to this secret as may enable me to penetrate the rest. Nor do we now part till I have proved whether or not prayers and intreaties will open her lips to satisfy me in respect of the rank which my father held.”

But in this attempt I was not to have the satisfaction of succeeding. When I turned round, the woman stood facing me, with her veil still raised, and an earnest expression on her countenance.

“Lady,” said I imploringly, “I pray you to tell me frankly who you are, and how you happen to know more of my affairs than I myself know.”

“Ask not now,” replied she, “who I am, or whence I come, or whither I go. In good time you shall learn all. But,” continued she, “hearken to what I have to say, and, in whatever light you regard me, disregard not the words I now speak. I am an Englishwoman, I have an English heart, and I would fain impart by your agency a warning to England’s king, to whom I and mine have been beholden. Let King Edward, I say, beware! or the prize on which he so highly prides himself will escape his grasp. Already treachery is at work. Calais is sold for French gold; and if the king looks not to its security, and that right early, Calais will, ere long, be in the hands of his foes.”

At this startling intelligence I bent my head, and mused for a few moments as to its probability. When

I again looked up, my visitor was gone. I followed instantly, but still too late; she had disappeared. My curiosity, however, was so highly excited that I rushed on, and meeting Robert Salle—who was then attached as a squire to Aymery de Pavie, and who, being one of the strongest and handsomest Englishmen of his day, afterwards, though merely the son of a mason, acquired great renown for his ability and courage, and took knighthood from King Edward's own hand—arrested his steps.

“Sir squire,” asked I hastily, “marked you any woman pass this way?”

“Assuredly,” answered he, much marvelling at my excitement, “Eleanor de Gubium did pass—she whom men call the fairest English-woman in Calais.”

“And who,” inquired I eagerly, “may this Eleanor de Gubium be when in her own country?”

“Beshrew me if I can tell,” replied the squire; “only this is certain,” added he with a smile, “that she is one of whom my lord the governor is so enamoured that men say she has bewitched him; and he commits to her the innermost secrets of his heart.”

“You mean Sir Aymery de Pavie?” said I, more agitated than ever.

“Surely none other,” he replied curtly. “Who else than Sir Aymery de Pavie should I mean? I trow there is but one Governor of Calais.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII

CALAIS IN PERIL

MUCH marvelling at the unexpected warning I had so strangely received, and attaching the more importance to the communication the longer I considered the matter, I felt, after long reflection, that I should not be by any means justified in locking it up in my own breast and keeping it to myself.

It was true, and I felt strongly, that I could not, under the circumstances, tell a very satisfactory story; for Eleanor de Gubium had been mysterious, and I somewhat dreaded

the ridicule to which my narrative of her visit might expose me, even if it did not involve me in more unfortunate consequences. But from childhood my grandsire had impressed on me the necessity of doing what I perceived to be my duty at all hazards; and no sooner was I in England than I hastened to the palace of Westminster, where the king was then holding his court, and, seeking out the Prince of Wales, told plainly to him what had been told to me.

I quickly perceived that my story made no impression on the mind of the prince, and that he considered I had been fooled by a mad woman or by an impostor. At first, indeed, he was inclined to laugh to scorn the idea of Calais being in danger; but, on second thoughts, he intimated his intention of communicating my statement to the king; and when, without delay, he did so, the result was not what he seemed to expect. Not so lightly did King Edward treat the matter as the prince had done. Far from despising or neglecting the warning, he summoned me to his presence, questioned me closely, though more courteously than was his wont in such cases, as to the particulars of my story, and, by his manner and words, indicated his conviction that there was treachery at work which must be defeated.

“On my faith,” said the king, bending his brow and shaking his head, “this must be looked to, and that speedily; and, seeing that no man is so likely as Aymery de Pavie to know what is passing in Calais, he must be ordered to cross the seas and come hither without loss of time.”

“Sire,” said I, beginning to be alarmed at the serious aspect the affair was assuming, “I crave pardon of your highness when I beg you to bear in mind that I have cast suspicion on no man, but merely related what was said to me.”

“You have done what was your duty,” replied the king somewhat sternly, “and well will it be for others if they can prove that they have done theirs.”

And now not an hour was lost in despatching a messenger to Calais; and, with all possible speed, Aymery de Pavie, in obedience to the king’s command, came to

England, and made his appearance at the palace of Westminster.

Not having the least idea, however, of the nature of the business on which he had been summoned to England, and aware of the high favour which he had hitherto enjoyed at the English court, the Lombard entered the royal presence with perfect confidence, and, having bent his knee, stood calmly awaiting the king's commands.

"Ha, Sir Aymery! Sir Aymery!" said the king, taking the Lombard aside, "wot you what was the response of the oracle of Delphi, when consulted by a king of the olden times, known as Philip of Macedon, on the best way of carrying on war?"

"Sire, I know not," answered the Lombard, with a smile.

"Well, Sir Aymery," continued the king, "it was, if I remember aright, to make gold his weapon, and he would conquer all. Moreover, the advice proved most advantageous to his affairs, and he afterwards owned that he had taken more towns with money than with arms; that he never forced a gate till after having tried to open it with a golden key; and that he did not deem any fortress impregnable into which a mule laden with treasure could find entrance."

"Sire," said the Lombard, slightly colouring, and beginning to give way to agitation, "of all this I was ignorant."

"I doubt it not, Sir Aymery," resumed the king—"I doubt it not; but I imagine that such is not the case with Philip of Valois. In truth, it seems to me that my adversary has bethought him, in his troubles, of the response of the oracle, and determined to try the system pursued with such success by his namesake of Macedon. What say you, Sir Aymery?"

The Lombard was silent with surprise and consternation, and appeared to tremble and gasp for breath.

"Answer me, sir," said the king sternly. "Deem you my words but idle air?"

"Sire," replied the Lombard, with a last desperate effort not to betray himself, "I am in all things yours to command."

“By St. George and my grandsire’s sword! and so, methinks, you ought, if you knew more of gratitude than the name, Sir Aymery,” exclaimed the king angrily. “I brought you up from a child; I showed you much favour; and I entrusted to you what I hold dearest in the world, save my wife and children—I mean the town and castle of Calais; and, to requite all my kindness, you have sold them to the French. Now for this, I say, you deserve death.”

At this stage the Lombard suddenly drew energy from the excess of his despair, and, flinging himself on his knees, raised his hands in supplication.

“Ah, gentle king,” cried he, “for God’s sake have mercy upon me! All that you have said is very true. I confess that I have entered into a treaty with the French to deliver up Calais for twenty thousand crowns; but, as it was not to be fulfilled till December, and I have not received a single penny, there is still time to break the bargain.”

“Mayhap, Sir Aymery,” said the king; “nevertheless, no punishment could be too severe for your ingratitude and the treachery you have meditated; and, were Philip of Valois in my place, he would send you straight to the gallows. But do as I bid, and I promise that your life shall be spared. Nay, speak not, but listen. It is my wish that you continue this treaty; that you say nothing of my having discovered your treason; and that you inform me of the day on which you engage to deliver up Calais.”

“Sire, I will obey you in all things,” cried the Lombard, inspired with feelings similar to those that animate the heart of a man suddenly rescued from the danger of being swallowed up in the sea.

“Well, then,” added the king, “on these conditions I promise you my pardon, and, that you may earn it, your first duty is to return to your post at Calais, to keep the nature of our interview secret, even from the wild winds, and, on peril of your life, not again to be false to me for a moment, even in your thoughts.”

“Sire,” said the Lombard earnestly, “I swear on my soul, to handle the business so that it shall turn out wholly for your advantage.”

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE LORDS DE OV

FROM the first hour of my arrival at Westminster, after returning from Calais, I had naturally been eager to visit my grandsire's homestead, of which, in the midst of battles and sieges, I had often dreamt pleasant dreams when stretched at rest on a foreign soil. But I felt, in some degree, responsible for the warning I had brought to England as to Calais being in peril; and during the time that elapsed between my communication to the Prince of Wales and the arrival of Aymery de Pavie I did not deem myself quite at liberty to leave the palace. No sooner, however, did I ascertain this much, at least, that the result of the Lombard's interview with the king had justified my intelligence, than I asked, and obtained, permission to repair, for a brief period, to the scene of my childhood.

Resolving to set out betimes next day, I availed myself of the interval to proceed to the Falcon, and hear such tidings of my kinsfolk as Thomelin of Winchester could impart. As I left the courtyard of the palace in a joyous mood, I encountered Lord De Ov, who was entering on horseback and with high feudal pride; and again he eyed me with a display of malice which renewed all the perplexity which his conduct had so frequently created in my mind.

"Why, in the name of all the saints, has this haughty young lord selected me, of all people, as the object of his hatred?" I asked myself for the hundredth time, and continued to question myself in vain, as I strode along the bush-grown Strand, and made for Gracechurch.

On reaching the Falcon, I found, to my disappointment, that Thomelin of Winchester was not at his hostelry, and, on inquiring more closely, I learned, somewhat to my alarm, that he had been summoned by my grandsire some days earlier, that he had set out in haste, and that he had not returned. Musing over this intelligence, and by no

means in so joyous a mood as that in which I left Westminster, I was issuing from the Falcon, when a small body of horse halted at the door; and, looking up, I, by the twilight, recognised in their leader no less memorable a man than my Northern friend, John Copeland, now a knight banneret, and famous for his adventure with the King of Scots.

I doffed my bonnet as I made the discovery, and held the knight's stirrup as he dismounted from his strong steed.

"Ha, master page!" cried he, recognising me in turn, "you have not come North to try your prowess against the Scots, as I asked you. Nevertheless, we have met again."

"Even so, sir knight," I replied frankly. "And yet, to tell the truth, if I have refrained from coming North, it was not from any expectation of seeing you in the South, considering the high duties you are now called on to perform."

"And wherefore should you see me not in the South, boy?" asked Copeland. "Deem you," added he, not concealing the pride he felt in his elevation, "that the king, when he comes home, hath nothing to say to a man whom he trusts to hold such posts as Warden of Berwick, and Governor of the Castle of Roxburgh?"

"Nay, on my faith," replied I, laughing, "far be it from me to hazard any such assertion. Rather let me give you joy of your prosperous fortunes."

"Thanks, master page; and mayhap—as men, whether young or old, are ever envious—you would like to add that prosperity is not always a proof of merit. But be that as it may, I will, in this hostelry, rest my long limbs for a while ere I proceed to Westminster, and gladly drink a cup with thee for the sake of old acquaintance."

I accepted the invitation, and without delay we were seated and quaffing the wine of Bordeaux in the guest-room of the Falcon.

"Beshrew me, boy!" remarked Copeland, looking at me keenly as he raised his cup to his lips and took a long draught, "it grieves me to perceive that, young as you

are, you have the marks of care on your face. What ails you?"

"I can scarce tell," replied I sadly; "but this I know—that, one short hour since, my heart was light and merry as the month of May."

"And what has since happened to sadden your brow?" asked he kindly.

"More than one thing has happened to discompose me; for, in truth, to be frank with you, I met, as I came hither, a young lord, of whom I know little, save that he is mine enemy, and that his hate seems as bitter as it is causeless. Now, as I wish to live in charity with all men, if I could, I own that, had I no other cause for sadness, this alone would vex my spirit."

"Of whom speak you?" asked Copeland, with unveiled curiosity.

"Of the young Lord De Ov," answered I.

"Ho, ho!" exclaimed the Northernman.

"What?" asked I; "know you aught of him?"

"Ay," answered Copeland slowly and grimly, "more, by St. John of Beverley! than he would care to hear; but nothing, I own, to enable me to guess why he should bear malice towards such as you."

"But what know you of him?" asked I eagerly.

"This, at least," replied Copeland in a low tone, "that he feels his seat less soft than a bed of down, and that his temper is severely tried at times."

"In what way?" asked I.

"Why, simply because men say—or, at least, whisper, if they dare not say it aloud—that he is not the true heir of the barons whose titles he bears and whose lands he possesses. But you must have heard something of the story?"

"Not a whisper," said I. "I pray you relate it. I am all attention."

"I will relate it," said Copeland; "but understand, master page, that what I say is under the rose: it is not safe to speak freely of the great."

"Credit me, sir knight, you are safe with me," exclaimed I firmly; "I am incapable of betraying any man's confidence."

“Well, then,” began Copeland, “you must know that, in the year 1330, soon after King Edward—the second of the name—was cruelly murdered in Berkeley Castle—for a cruel murder it was—Isabel the queen and Roger de Mortimer, with whom Queen Isabel was deemed much too familiar, held sway in the country.”

“I have heard that such was the case,” said I.

“At that time,” continued Copeland, “rumours, which assuredly were false, ran about to the effect that King Edward was still alive, and that he was a prisoner in Corfe Castle; and a conspiracy, in which many good men took part, was formed to restore him to liberty.”

“Even so,” said I; “of this I have heard vaguely.”

“At the head of that conspiracy,” continued Copeland, “was Edmund, Earl of Kent, the young king’s uncle, who, believing his brother to be still alive, rashly went to Corfe Castle, and asked the governor of the fortress to conduct him to Sire Edward; for which indiscretion he was tried at Winchester and executed.”

“I have heard that sad tale,” said I, interrupting; “how the earl’s sentence caused such indignation that even the headsman declined to do his office; how he remained four hours on the scaffold before any one could be found to enact the part of executioner; and how, finally, a malefactor from the Marshalsea, on being bribed with a promise of pardon, undertook to behead him.”

“It was even as you relate it,” said Copeland, resuming; “and it happened that one of the men of rank engaged in the conspiracy of which the Earl of Kent was head, was Edward, Lord De Ov, a brave warrior, whose wife was a daughter of the house of Merley. Now, it was generally considered that this Lord De Ov—who, I may mention, was marvellously skilful in those chivalrous tricks which you, and striplings like you, value so highly—might have escaped to France, as the Lord Viscount Beaumont and others did about the same time, and lived, like them, to return to England in happier days; but, unluckily for his chances of escape, he had a younger brother named Roger, who, from base motives, betrayed him. So, instead of getting off, he was taken, while lurking

on the coast, carried to Winchester, and hanged in that city on a high gibbet."

"My curse on the brother who could be guilty of such treachery!" exclaimed I, my blood boiling with indignation.

"But," continued Copeland, heedless of my interruption, "this was not all. Edward, Lord De Ov, had a wife and infant son; and for Roger's purpose it was necessary to make away with them also; and accordingly the widow was decoyed away by Margery, one of the queen's gentlewomen, who pretended that she had been sent for by her husband, and, carrying with her the infant son, left her husband's castle at Winchester. For years neither mother nor son was heard of. At length, however, they were reputed to have died, and corpses, said to be theirs, were brought North, and buried in the chapel of the castle; and Roger De Ov became lord of all. But Roger soon after pined and died; and, when he went the way of all flesh, his son, who is now lord, succeeded to his feudal power. But men still say that, somewhere or other, the widow and son of Edward, Lord De Ov, yet live, and that one day or other there will be an overturn; and now you comprehend wherefore my lord sits less easy in his seat than he might otherwise, do, and how there may be people living whose demands put his temper to the test."

"Assuredly," said I, "the story is sufficiently plain, albeit involving a mystery."

"And, if I mistake not," remarked Copeland significantly, "there are at least two people alive who could clear that mystery up to satisfaction."

"Who may they be?" asked I.

"One," answered he in a whisper, "is no less a personage than Isabel the queen, now residing, in gentle captivity, at Castle Rising."

"And the other?" I inquired eagerly, for my curiosity was by this time excited.

"The other," answered he, "is a person of fewer years and lesser rank than Queen Isabel. She is daughter of a Northern squire who was an honest man, and mine own kinsman, and married the queen's gentlewoman of whom

I spake. I cast my eyes by chance on the damsel when in the camp before Calais, and recognised her in an instant. Nay, more, I made enquiries, and learned that her beauty exercised enormous influence over the heart of Aymery de Pavie, and that her threats exercised as much over the conduct of Lord De Ov, insomuch that one did as she liked from love, and the other from fear."

I involuntarily uttered an exclamation of surprise, and my agitation was so great that it well-nigh got the better of my discretion and of all the resolutions I had formed. However, I regained my equanimity, and calmly renewed the conversation.

"And what name bears this wondrous demoiselle, sir knight? by what name is she known?" asked I, with what coolness I could command.

"The demoiselle is known by the name of Eleanor de Gubium," was Copeland's reply.

CHAPTER XL

TOO LATE

My imagination, such as it was, completely got the better of what reasoning faculty I possessed as Copeland concluded, and, having accompanied him to Westminster with a brain on fire, I never slept that night. I persuaded myself, in the absence of all evidence, that I was the victim of a monstrous piece of injustice; I walked about my chamber like an enraged lion pacing its cage, and I grew feverish with impatience for the break of day. Early next morning, while the palace was still hushed in repose, I was on horseback, and on the way to my grandsire's homestead.

As I rode along I strove to collect my thoughts and to prepare myself for the anticipated interview with those whose faces I had of late so often and so earnestly longed to behold. But my efforts to recover calmness were in vain. Within twelve short hours my whole ideas had undergone a change. Copeland's Northern voice still

rang in my ears ; his tragic story occupied my mind ; my imagination ever and anon conjured up the probability of its being a matter in which I had both part and lot, and rapidly converted probability into certainty ; and all sentiments of tenderness for home and kindred gave way before my intense desire to penetrate the mystery which I fancied was now illumined by a ray of light.

“ Ere sunset,” I exclaimed to myself in a tone of exultation, “ I shall learn all that concerns me, or know the reason why.”

A long journey, as I must have felt, lay before me. But no consideration of the kind influenced me even so far as to make me spare the good steed I bestrode. On I spurred, as if the Furies had been behind, and Paradise before. But, fast as went my steed, faster still flew my thoughts, and faster than either rushed the warm blood through my veins. I scarce noted anything by the way ; and the herdsman driving out his cattle, the waggoner with his team of oxen, the charcoal-burner with his cart, the chapman with his pack-horses, the pilgrim leaning on his staff, and carrying the palm branch to deposit on the altar of his church, made way for me, and stared in silent amaze as I passed, probably fancying me one of those spectre huntsmen of whom legends tell.

As I sped on my way, and entered the great forest of Windsor, a hare crossed my path. Of evil omen such a circumstance is generally regarded, and at another time I might have felt some slight alarm. Now, however, one idea possessed my whole heart and mind ; I was in a mood to laugh at omens ; and, spurring on and on with hot speed, rousing the deer and the wild cattle, I pursued my way, indifferent to the belling of deer and the bellowing of cattle. At length as the day was speeding on towards noon, I reined up my jaded and exhausted horse as I approached the home of my childhood.

But now, for the first time, my heart misgave me. No longer did the homestead seem to present to my eye the same cheerful aspect as of old—all was silent and melancholy. An instinctive feeling that something was wrong flashed through me, and filled me with sudden fear. I sprang from my steed and rushed to the door, shouting

loudly, and, as I did so, Thomelin of Winchester appeared with a face which confirmed all my fears.

"Alas!" said he, shaking his head, "you have come too late."

I had already guessed all, and was at no loss to interpret his words. The Great Destroyer had visited the homestead, as he was ere long to visit almost every house in the kingdom, and demanded his prey, and both the grey-haired warrior and the melancholy widow had fallen victims to his rapacity.

"What mean you, Thomelin?" asked I wildly, for I scarce knew what I said. "Can it be that my grandsire and my mother are no more?"

"Both," replied Thomelin solemnly. "Both have gone to their long home. May God have mercy on their souls!"

I said "Amen" and crossed myself devoutly as Thomelin spoke; but even at that moment, which was sad and bitter, the idea uppermost in my thoughts was that which for hours had been presenting itself in such a variety of forms.

"And the secret of my birth, good Thomelin," said I, taking his hand, "know you anything certain as to that?"

"Nothing certain, as I live," answered he earnestly. "Only of this I am, and have ever been, well assured, that Adam of Greenmead was not your grandsire, nor was your mother kinswoman of mine."

"And who, then, was my mother?" I demanded.

"Nay, that is more than I could tell, if both our lives depended on my so doing," he replied. "Whatever the secret, it has perished with those who kept it so faithfully."

I uttered a groan, and well-nigh sank under my mortification.

"In truth, Thomelin," murmured I, "you were right in saying that I had come too late. But God's will be done!"

CHAPTER XLI

HOW CALAIS WAS SAVED

AT the time when Aymery de Pavie unworthily figured as governor of the town and castle of Calais, Geoffrey de Chargny, a French knight of high distinction, was stationed at St. Omer by Philip of Valois to defend the frontier against the English.

Now, it occurred, not altogether unnaturally, to Geoffrey de Chargny, that, as the Lombards are by nature avaricious, Aymery de Pavie might, with a little art, be bribed to surrender Calais; and when, albeit it was a time of truce, he, without scruple, made the experiment, he succeeded so well in his negotiations that the Lombard executed a secret treaty, whereby, proving false to the King of England, he covenanted to deliver the stronghold into the French knight's hands, on condition of receiving, as a reward for his perfidy, the sum of twenty thousand crowns.

So far the project seemed to prosper; and, even after Aymery de Pavie returned from England, all went so smoothly that De Chargny considered that he had reason to congratulate himself on his skill, and to entertain no doubt of final success. In fact, the Lombard appeared all anxiety to bring the business to a successful issue, and appointed the last day of the year for fulfilling the treaty.

Everything having been thus arranged, at the close of December, Geoffrey de Chargny, dreaming sanguinely of the elevation to which he believed his exploit was to raise him in the eyes of his countrymen and his country's foes, left St. Omer at the head of a formidable force, and, accompanied by Sir Odoart de Renty, Sir Eustace de Ribeaumont, and many other knights of fame, marched towards Calais, and, halting near the bridge of Nieullet just as the old year was expiring, sent forward two squires, on whose sagacity he relied, to confer with the Lombard, and ascertain how matters stood.

"Is it time for Sir Geoffrey to advance?" asked the squires.

"It is," was the answer; and, after this brief conference, the squires hastened back to intimate to their leader that the hour for his grand achievement was come.

On hearing what was the answer of the Lombard, De Chargny lost no time. At once he gave orders to advance; and, leaving a strong force of horse and foot to keep the bridge of Nieullet, and posting the crossbowmen whom he had brought from St. Omer and Aire in the plain between the bridge and the town, he sent forward Odoart de Renty, with a hundred men-at-arms, and a bag containing the twenty thousand crowns, to take possession of the castle, and marched forward cautiously, with his banner displayed, to the gate that leads from Calais to Boulogne.

Meanwhile, onward hastened Odoart de Renty; and no sooner did he and his men-at-arms reach the castle than Aymery de Pavie let down the drawbridge, and opened one of the gates to admit them. Without hesitation they entered, and Odoart handed over the bag containing the crowns.

"I suppose they are all here?" said the Lombard, flinging the bag into a room which he locked; "but to count them I have not now time. We must not lose a moment, for presently it will be day. To make matters safe, I will conduct you at once to the great tower, so that you may make yourself master of the castle."

While speaking, Aymery de Pavie advanced in the direction of the great tower of the castle; and, as he pushed back the bolt, the door flew open; but, as Sir Odoart and his comrades found to their horror, it was not to admit them. In fact, the shout that arose from hundreds of voices immediately convinced the French that the business was not to terminate so satisfactorily as they had anticipated, and they began to comprehend that there was a lion in the way.

Nor is it difficult to account for such having been the case. From the day of his return to Calais, Aymery de Pavie, as if to atone for his perfidy, had maintained the promise he had given to the King of England; and Edward was no sooner informed of the night on which, according to the secret treaty, Calais was to be sur-

rendered to the French, than he prepared to go thither. Taking with him three hundred men-at-arms and six hundred archers, he embarked at Dover with the Prince of Wales and Sir Walter Manny; and, having landed at Calais so privately that hardly a being in the town knew of his arrival, he placed his men in ambuscade in the rooms and towers of the castle.

“Walter,” said the king, addressing the brave Manny, “it is my pleasure that you act as the chief of this enterprise, and I and my son will fight, as simple knights, under your banner.”

Now the King of England, attended by his son and Sir Walter Manny, posted himself, with two hundred lances, in the great tower to which the Lombard led the French, and no sooner was the door thrown open than they raised the shout of “Manny! Manny to the rescue!” and rushed upon the intruders. Resistance being quite vain, Sir Odoart and his companions yielded themselves prisoners, while the king turned to his son—

“What!” said he scornfully, “do the French dream of conquering Calais with such a handful of men? Now let us mount our horses, form in order of battle, and complete our work.”

It was scarcely yet daybreak; and the morning of the 1st of January was intensely cold, as Geoffrey de Chargny, seated on horseback, with his banner displayed and his friends around him, waited patiently at the Boulogne gate to enter and seize Calais.

“By my faith, gentlemen!” said he angrily, if this Lombard delays much longer opening the gate, we shall all die of cold.”

“True,” said another knight; “but, in God’s name, let us be patient. These Lombards are a suspicious sort of people, and perhaps he is examining your florins to see if there are any bad ones, and to satisfy himself that they are right in number.”

At this moment an unexpected spectacle presented itself. The gate suddenly opened, trumpets loudly sounded, and from the town sallied horseman after horseman, armed with sword and battle-axe, and shouting loudly, “St. George for England!” and “Manny to the onslaught!”

"By Heavens!" cried the French in amazement, as many turned to beat a retreat, "we are betrayed!"

"Gentlemen," cried De Chargny, "do not fly; if we fly we lose all."

"By St. George!" shouted the English, who were now close enough to hear, "you speak truth. Evil befall him who thinks of flying!"

"You hear, gentlemen?" said De Chargny. "It will be more advantageous to us to fight valiantly, and the day may be ours."

And as he spoke, the French, at his orders, retreating a little, and dismounting, drove their horses away from them that they might not be trampled on, and formed in close order, with their pikes shortened and planted before them.

On seeing this movement on the part of the French, King Edward halted the banner under which he was, and dismounting, as did the prince, prepared to attack on foot.

"I would have our men drawn up here in order of battle," said he to Sir Walter Manny, "and let a good detachment be sent towards the bridge of Nieullet; for I believe a large body of French to be posted there."

And, the king's orders being passed on without delay, six banners and three hundred archers left the force and made for the bridge.

And now came the tug of war. Advancing with his men on foot, and his son by his side, the king assaulted his foes battle-axe in hand; and sharp and fierce was the encounter as English and French mingled hand to hand and steel to steel. Many were the brave deeds performed in the grey morning, and on both sides the warriors fought with high courage. But, of all the combatants, none displayed more valour and dexterity than the king himself. Fighting incognito under the banner of Manny, and singling out Eustace de Ribeaumont, he maintained with that strong and hardy knight a desperate conflict. Long they fought, the English king with his battle-axe, the French champion with his mighty sword. Twice the king was beaten to his knee, and twice he sprang to his feet to renew the combat. Even after having been separated in the confusion of the battle, they contrived

again to meet, and again to close in a fierce and resolute conflict.

But, meanwhile, fortune had gone so decidedly against the French that all their hopes vanished. Many were slain. Geoffrey de Chargny and others were taken prisoners; and, when Sir Eustace paused for an instant to look round, he perceived that he stood almost alone amid a host of foes.

"Yield!" said the king. "You are vanquished, and have done all that a brave man could."

"It is true, sir knight," said Sir Eustace, surrendering his sword. "I see that the honour of the day belongs to the English, and I yield myself your prisoner."

While this struggle was taking place at the Boulogne gate, a fierce fight went on at the bridge of Nieullet. In fact, the party of English detached by the king having first attacked the crossbowmen, drove them from the ground with such force that many of them were drowned in the river, and then rushed on the defenders of the bridge. But the knights of Picardy, who kept the bridge, were less easily dealt with than the crossbowmen; and, for a time, they maintained their post with determination, and performed so many gallant actions as to move the envy of their assailants. Their courage, however, was vain; and at length, hard pressed by the English, they mounted their horses, and, pursued by their foes, fled fast away.

It was now broad day, and King Edward, still maintaining his incognito, returned to the castle of Calais, and gave orders that the prisoners taken in the battle should be brought into his presence. Much marvelled the French knights to find that the King of England was among them in person, and much diverted were the English at the amazement expressed by their vanquished adversaries.

"Gentlemen," said the king, raising his hand for silence, "this being New Year's Day, I purpose in the evening to entertain you all at supper, and I hope you will all do honour to the occasion, and make good cheer."

"Sire," said the French knights, bowing low, "you are a noble prince, who know how to honour your enemies as well as your friends."

Accordingly, when the hour for supper arrived, the tables were spread in the castle hall; and the king, bare-headed, but wearing, by way of ornament, a rich chaplet of pearls, seated himself at table, and gathered the captive Frenchmen around him; while the Prince of Wales and the knights of England served up the first course, and waited on the guests.

But this was not all. When supper was over, and when the tables were drawn, the king remained in the hall, and conversed with the prisoners, each in turn, and, while marking his sense of the unfair conduct of Geoffrey de Chargny, he took care to mark, in a manner not to be mistaken, his appreciation of the valour and prowess of Eustace de Ribeaumont.

“Sir Geoffrey,” said the king, looking askance at the baffled knight, “I have little reason to love you, as you must know. You wished to seize from me, last night, by stealth, and in the time of truce, what had given me so much trouble to acquire, and cost me such sums of money. But, with God’s assistance, we have disappointed you, and I am rejoiced to have caught you thus in your attempt. As for you, Sir Eustace,” continued Edward, turning to his vanquished antagonist with a smile on his countenance, “of all the knights in Christendom whom I have ever seen defend himself, or attack an enemy, you are the most valiant. I never yet met in battle any one who, body to body, gave me so much trouble as you have done this day. And,” added he, taking off his chaplet, and placing it on the knight’s head, “I present you with this chaplet as being the best combatant of the day, either within or without the walls; and I beg you to wear it this year for love of me. I know that you are lively, and that you love the company of ladies and damsels; therefore, wherever you go, say that I gave it to you. I also grant you your liberty free of ransom, and you may set out to-morrow, if you please, and go whither you will.”

Such was the result of Geoffrey de Chargny’s project for gratifying Philip of Valois by gaining possession of Calais.

CHAPTER XLII

A PRINCESS IN PERIL

My excitement, which for many hours before I reached the homestead, where I came just in time to hear that I was too late, had been intense, gradually subsided; and such was the reaction which took place that, for days and weeks, my depression was well-nigh intolerable. I had no heart to return to Westminster; and having, on the plea of recruiting my health and spirits in the air I had breathed during childhood, obtained from Sir Thomas Norwich leave to absent myself from my duties as page, I walked and rode about the forest of Windsor, indulging in melancholy musing over the past, and as indifferent to the future as I had previously been enthusiastic and sanguine. In vain I essayed to rouse myself from lethargy. I felt as if nothing could ever again revive my hope, and restore me to that energy which is hope in action. I had already passed weeks in this frame of mind, when fortune threw me in the way of a terrible adventure, in which I won some honour, and nearly lost my life.

It was autumn; and albeit the harvest was gathered in, and the leaves were falling from the trees, the sun shone with sufficient brightness to gladden the heart of man, and to impart to the landscape a cheerful aspect; when, having occasion one day to visit the little town of Windsor, I mounted my black steed and rode through the forest. When, absorbed in reflection, I was wending my way up one of the glades, my horse, while pacing proudly along the grassy path, suddenly shied; and, looking round, I perceived that he had been startled by the green dress and white bow of an archer, who emerged from the wood, closely attended by a black mastiff of prodigious strength, and capable of being a powerful friend or a terrible foe.

I observed that the archer eyed me with a glance of recognition; and, drawing up, I, with a consciousness of having seen him before, gave him "Good day," and, with a slight effort of memory, I called to mind that he

was one of the Englishmen who, stationed in the prince's division, had drawn their bows at Cressy; that I had often observed and praised his dexterity during the expedition into France; and, moreover, that he was one of those who had been since taken into the king's service, by way of rewarding them for their marvellous achievements during the war with Philip of Valois. Remembering such to have been the case, I entered into conversation with him, and while I rode slowly, and he walked at my stirrup, with his mastiff at his heels, through the forest, in the direction of Windsor, he talked of the battles and sieges in which he had taken part.

Now this archer, whose name was Liulph, was of yeoman extraction and Saxon descent; and I have no doubt that, if he had lived in earlier centuries, when a bitter sense of the distinction between the victor and vanquished races kept the kingdom in hot water, he would have figured as an outlaw of Sherwood, and possibly rivalled the exploits which have made the names of Robin Hood and his merry men so famous. But England was no longer what it had been in the days of Robin Hood and his merry men; for the first Edward had succeeded in teaching English archers to draw their bows only against the enemies of their country, and they had not forgotten the lessons of that great king.

It happened, however, that Liulph was not only a stout and handsome young man, but intelligent for a person of his rank, and of an inquiring turn of mind; and being on this occasion anxious to learn something of St. George, under whose patronage he had fought the French, he put several questions, which, I fear, would sadly have perplexed many who shouted the name most loudly in the hour of conflict. Fortunately, however, I was in a position to return satisfactory answers, and related that St. George was a Christian and a native of Cappadocia; that, making an expedition into Libya in quest of adventure, he arrived just in time to save the king's daughter from a terrible dragon which had devoured many of the inhabitants; and that, becoming famous throughout Christendom as a warrior-saint, he was, as time rolled on, acknowledged as patron of the old Dukes of Guienne, from whom, in the

female line, the Plantagenets derive their descent; and that, therefore, King Edward, when instituting the Order of the Garter, and placing it under the protection of the Trinity and certain saints, recognised St. George as the chief, and in his honour founded, at Windsor, the chapel that bears his name.

As I brought my narrative to a termination, we were approaching the castle of Windsor, and were, indeed, so close that I could see the stronghold through the trees. At the same time I descried, at no great distance from the place we had reached, a party of ladies; and, aware that Queen Philippa and her daughters were residing at the castle, I had no difficulty in recognising the Lady Isabel, who in the previous year had been betrothed to, and then deserted by, the young Count of Flanders. On seeing the princess and her ladies I reined back my steed, and, not wishing to intrude on their privacy, was turning to make for the town by another direction, when an exclamation, expressive of alarm, which broke from Liulph, directed my attention to a circumstance which made my blood run cold, and all but froze every vein in my heart.

I have already alluded to the wild cattle which, jointly with the deer, tenanted the forest, and I may say that, so familiarised were people with their presence, they caused no fear. Generally, indeed, when not wantonly disturbed, they grazed quietly without showing the least inclination to mischief, and so seldom did they exhibit anything resembling mortal antipathy to human beings, that even the weak and timid felt no apprehension from being in their neighbourhood.

But to every rule there are exceptions, and, at times when there was the least likelihood, the ferocious nature of the wild cattle showed itself—and this was especially the case with such of them as were known to, and somewhat dreaded by, the foresters as “banished bulls.” In fact, these animals having, as they advanced in years, rendered themselves odious to their comrades by their bad temper, and been in consequence expelled from the herd, became savage while grazing in solitude, and easily excited to sudden frenzy.

Now it happened, on the autumn day of which I write, that when the king's daughter and her ladies were walking in the forest, and so near the castle that they deemed themselves as safe as if they had been on the ramparts, a "banished bull," having ventured closer to the town than was the wont of his kind, was grazing all alone among the trees. White as a swan was this bull, with short legs and thick hams, and a shaggy mane that curled like the sea billows, and a massy neck like the trunk of some old knotted tree; but his hoofs were black, and jet black were the horns that, like two daggers, stood out from his broad and wrinkled front.

And suddenly this bull, disturbed by the sound of voices, raised his head; and, as he caught sight of the scarlet cloak worn by the princess, he gave signs, not to be misunderstood, of being bent on mischief.

Rearing his head, while his eye, a moment earlier dark, glared red as the mantle which arrested his attention and excited his ire, he stretched out his neck, and with a loud bellow moved slowly forward, pawing the sod with his hoof and gradually quickening his pace, till, having lashed himself into a fury, his movement became a violent rush, and, like sheep at the approach of a wolf, the ladies dispersed, screaming with terror and affright. But the princess did not move. Facing the ferocious brute, she folded her arms, and with her eyes raised to Heaven, as if uttering a last prayer, she stood in expectation of immediate destruction. It seemed, indeed, that there was no chance of any obstacle intervening between her and death.

But, meanwhile, neither the archer nor I was an idle spectator of her peril. Quick as thought Liulph's bow was strung, and an arrow in his hand; not less quickly my sword left its sheath and the spur pressed my horse's flank. Almost as I dashed to the rescue, an arrow, aimed at the bull's vital part, just at the junction of the skull and the spine, whistled through the air. But, dexterous as the archer was, his shaft failed to hit his mark, struck the bull within an inch of the eye without inflicting a wound; and while I threw myself in his way, resolute at least to die in staying the rush, the animal, more furious

than ever, came roaring on, with eyes of fire and tail erect.

I was not, however, daunted. Rising in my stirrups as the bull approached, and feeling as if there was but one blow between me and death, I aimed with all my might at the part which the archer had missed. But I was not more fortunate than he had been; and as my sword, having lighted on bone hard as rock, flew to pieces, my antagonist, stunned but unhurt, drew back to prepare for a more furious rush. Drawing my reins tight, I exerted all my horsemanship to avoid the full shock. But this time he was not to be resisted. Frantic with rage and foaming at the mouth, he charged upon me with terrific violence; and, transfixed with both horns, my horse rolled backward, bearing me to the ground.

My fate now appeared to be sealed; and as the bull, with his horns in the bowels of my fallen steed, stood over me bellowing furiously, I gave myself up for lost. But I had an ally, on whose aid I could not, in my excitement, reckon. With a fierce growl, a loud bark, and a rapid bound, the mastiff came to the rescue, seized the bull's lip, and, the teeth tenaciously retaining their grasp, in spite of desperate struggles, prevented the animal from raising his head to pursue his success.

By this time I breathed anew; and, freeing my limbs from my bleeding horse, I rose on my knee and grasped my dagger to bring the conflict to a close. Nor was there, this time, any mistake. One flash, and my steel, cold and keen, had penetrated my terrible antagonist's neck; one plunge, and, bellowing with pain, my terrible antagonist rolled heavily on the ground. As, covered with blood, I gained my feet, trembling with excitement, side by side lay the black steed and the white bull, their hides smeared with their own and each other's gore, their limbs wet with the death sweat, and quivering convulsively; and beside them, at his master's foot, stood the mastiff, with panting frame and protruding tongue, silently watching their expiring struggles.

Meanwhile, though unwounded, I grew faint with the bruises I had received and the exertion I had undergone; and hardly had the princess, taking courage to approach

the spot, opened her lips to acknowledge the service I had rendered her in the moment of peril, than I became dizzy, lost all consciousness of what was passing, and sank senseless on the ground.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE PLAGUE OF FLORENCE

NOT under circumstances the most joyous did King Edward reach England, after having baffled the ambition of Geoffrey de Chagny, and saved Calais from falling into the hands of Philip of Valois. Even while the tidings of his exploit on the morning of New Year's Day rang over England, and ministered to the national pride, Englishmen were in the utmost alarm at the approach of an enemy not so easily dealt with as the continental foe, so often trampled in the dust. Already that terrible pestilence, commonly known as "the plague of Florence," where, perhaps, its ravages were most terrible, had reached the shores no longer in danger from invaders in human form.

Never within the memory of man—never, perhaps, since the waters of the Flood subsided, and the Ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, and Noah and his sons came forth to repeople the earth, has Heaven so severely punished the sins of the nations as at the terrible period of which I write. From East to West an epidemic malady of unprecedented virulence ravaged the world, taking a wider range, and proving infinitely more destructive, than any calamity of the kind recorded in history, and spreading terror and desolation wherever it went.

It was in Asia, and in the year 1346, the year of Cressy, that this pestilence first appeared. But to Asia its ravages were not long confined. Entering Europe, it travelled rapidly westward, and, sweeping off Saracens, Jews, and Christians in its course, visited country after country and city after city. Already exhausted by war and humiliated by defeat, France suffered dreadful horrors. One-third of the inhabitants are said to have

perished; and, in Paris alone, fifty thousand human beings fell victims.

Nor was victorious and prosperous England exempt from the visitation which fell so heavily on her vanquished and impoverished foe. Far different was the case. At first the pestilence made its presence felt on the coasts of Dorset and Devon; but on the coast it did not long linger. Finding its way, on the one hand, to Norwich, and, on the other, to Bristol and Gloucester—all three seats of the woollen manufactures, flourishing under Queen Philippa's patronage—it wrought terrible havoc in these hives of industry, and finally, taking possession of London, caused such mortality that the living could scarce bury the dead. In one churchyard—that of the Charter House—several hundred funerals took place daily.

All over Christendom there seemed to hang a curse. In many places the pestilence swept away a fourth of the population; in others a third disappeared during its prevalence; and, in several, not more than one inhabitant out of ten survived its inroads. Even the beasts of the field yielded to its influence. Sheep and cattle perished as well as human beings; and in some places the air was so polluted that it was all but impossible to inhale it without catching the infection. Under such circumstances every bond of attachment seemed to burst asunder. Servants fled from their masters, wives from their husbands, and children from their parents. Nothing could exceed the awe which was inspired by the invisible destroyer.

At length the calamity, after passing through various stages, reached the worst, and gradually a change took place, and men began to look around them, and once more breathe freely. Forthwith a great reaction took place: people said, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry"; and many who but lately, when their danger appeared imminent, had been calling on the rocks to fall on them and cover them, now hastened to break loose from all restraint, set all laws at defiance, rushed into excess without scruple, and fearlessly ate the bread of wickedness and drank the wine of violence.

At the same time, fanaticism, raising her head, sent forth her votaries, and the consequences were fatal and unfortunate in more ways than one.

A fierce persecution of the Jews at once commenced in France and other countries where they were to be found. Accused by the populace of having caused the plague by poisoning the rivers and fountains, the unhappy Hebrews were hunted, burnt, and massacred by thousands. Never has the multitude been animated by so savage a spirit as then urged them on to cruelty and bloodshed. Every Jew appeared to be marked out for destruction; and the spirit of persecution, spreading daily, became so fierce and general that the Jews, having no hope of escape elsewhere, crowded towards Avignon, and sought safety—nor in vain—in the territories of the Church and under the protection of the Pope.

Meanwhile it was prophesied that, for one hundred years, people with iron scourges were to come to destroy the Jews; and now there appeared, in Germany, a sect of enthusiasts, of both sexes, who carried the iron scourges, but who, instead of applying them to the backs of the Jews, applied them to their own. Finding their way from Germany into Flanders, and from Flanders into England, these men and women—known as Flagellants—travelled in companies, and set reason and decency at defiance. Believing, or pretending to believe, that their sufferings were agreeable to the Divinity, they appeared in the squares and public places of cities and towns, naked to the girdle, and, while chanting, in a piteous tone, canticles of the nativity and passion of the Redeemer of Mankind, scourged themselves with their iron hoops, to expiate, as they said, the sins of the world.

In the midst of all this confusion, and persecution, and fanaticism, an event occurred which produced consequences of importance. One August day that pale spectre, which visits the castles of kings as impartially as the cottages of the poor, appeared at Nogent-le-Roi, where Philip of Valois then was. In his palace at that town, which is situated on the Eure, five leagues from Chartres, Philip, at the age of fifty-eight, breathed his

last. Immediately his eldest son, John, previously known as Duke of Normandy, was hailed as King of France, and a new scene opened.

CHAPTER XLIV

JOHN, KING OF FRANCE

MEMORABLE as the name of John of Valois will ever be in history, as associated with a terrible defeat, and with the countless woes which that defeat entailed upon the nation he aspired to rule, he yet deserves the praise of the valiant for his personal courage, for his chivalrous character, and for his noble saying, that, "if truth and good faith were banished from all the world, they should yet be found in the breasts of kings."

At the time when Philip of Valois, leaving his kingdom exhausted by war and humiliated by disaster, expired at Nogent-le-Roi, John had reached the age of thirty, and won renown as one of the foremost knights of his day. His education in youth had been carefully conducted; he was thoroughly instructed in all the laws of chivalry; and he was not without experience in war. At Cressy, indeed, his sword had not shone in the battle so fatal to the princes of France and the potentates of Europe. But from his twentieth year he had figured as a leader of armies; and in Hainault, in Brittany, and in Gascony he had been matched against warriors of skill and valour. Nature, however, while endowing him with high qualities, had not only denied him those which make a fearless knight a great war chief, but given him many which prevented him from acting with calmness and judgment. Brave, gallant, dauntless in fight, and with a hand strong to smite, he lacked discretion and the faculty of calculating chances; and he was too proud, rash, vindictive, and impetuous to hearken in hours of danger to the counsel of those who were wiser than himself.

Such being the faults and failings of John of France, even flattery itself could not represent him as a man

capable of playing for kingdoms and crowns with England's famous king, or with England's king's gallant son. But it was with no lack of confidence in himself, and with little apprehension as to the future, that, after having laid his father at rest among the old Kings of France near the altar of the church of St. Denis, he repaired to be crowned at Rheims.

It was on a Sunday in September that John, with his queen, Joan of Boulogne, was invested with the symbols of royalty in that cathedral which had witnessed the baptism of Clovis, and anointed with that oil which, according to tradition, was brought down from heaven in the holy ampulla to the good St. Remy of Rheims, when he was about to consecrate the conquering Frank, who, moved by the persuasions of his Christian wife, Clotilda, turned from the worship of Odin, and became "the eldest son of the Church." Nothing could have exceeded the grandeur of the coronation ceremony, nothing the magnificence of the feasts which John gave when he returned to Paris, and took up his residence in the Hôtel de Nesle. Impoverished as was the royal treasury, no expense was spared; and John really seemed to be mocking the claims of his dead father's conqueror by the display and noise which he made in assuming those regal honours of which, had he been a wiser man, he would have said, "I scarcely call these things mine."

Nor, at that time, could the danger be deemed so far distant as to encourage even the most credulous to indulge feelings of security. Doubtless there was a truce between England and France; but it was, to say the least, very brittle, and likely soon to be broken, and its existence did not prevent men from undertaking enterprises calculated to bring about a renewal of the war of which, so far, France had had so much the worse. Among others who had made themselves conspicuous in this way, Geoffrey de Chargny had highly distinguished himself.

It seems that Aymery de Pavie, after his unfortunate secret treaty for the sale of Calais, retired to Fretun, his castle in the neighbourhood, and there, with Eleanor

de Gubium as his guest, lived at his ease. Fancying that the French had forgotten him, and deeming himself perfectly safe, he took no more precaution than if he had been in London or at Westminster. He lived long enough to rue his recklessness, but not much longer.

In fact, Geoffrey de Chargny, who, after the failure of his project in Calais, was carried prisoner to England, but subsequently ransomed and restored to his own country, never for a moment forgot the trick which Aymery de Pavie had played, and never for a moment gave up the idea of inflicting a severe punishment. Hearing, on his return to France, that the Lombard was living at ease in the castle of Fretun, Chargny, who had been reinstated in his post at St. Omer, did not let the matter sleep; but, collecting a band of men-at-arms, he left St. Omer one evening, and, reaching Fretun about daybreak, surrounded the place, and, passing the ditch, prepared to enter by force.

“Now,” said Chargny to his comrades, “no plunder. Remember the truce. All we want is the perfidious Lombard.”

Aymery de Pavie, who had stretched himself to rest with a feeling of absolute security, and with no idea that his perfidy was remembered to his disadvantage, was sound asleep, when he was awoke by one of his servants, who entered the chamber pale with fright.

“My lord,” said he, “rise instantly; the castle is surrounded by armed men, who are attempting to enter.”

“Enter my castle, and in time of truce!” exclaimed the Lombard, astonished. “By my faith, they shall repent their hardihood!”

Much alarmed, Aymery de Pavie sprang up and hastily armed himself; but it was vain. Ere he was ready even to strike a blow the toils were upon him, and, looking out, he perceived that the courtyard was filled with armed men. Escape was impossible; resistance was vain; he found himself roughly seized; and, after struggling for a moment as a cony struggles in a net, he yielded to fate, and was led forth a captive.

Highly gratified at the prospect of a speedy revenge,

De Chagny conducted the Lombard and his fair companion to St. Omer, and resolved at once to strike the decisive blow. Immediately the knights and the people of the country were assembled; and the captive, having been led to the market-place, was put to death with much cruelty, amid the jeers of the crowd.

But no notice was taken of De Chagny's lawless adventure. It was John himself who took the step that roused Edward's wrath, and ultimately brought matters to a crisis. No sooner, indeed, did he feel the crown of St. Louis on his head than he was guilty of an act of despotic violence which, he ought to have seen, would involve a quarrel with an enemy whose active hostility, he might have been aware, it was madness under the circumstances to defy.

I have mentioned that when, in 1346, King Edward landed at La Hogue, and when the English, marching through Normandy, seized the town of Caen, one of the prisoners taken by them was the Count of Eu, Constable of France. Carried to England, the constable was lodged in the Tower of London. But his captivity was not without its consolation. Being a gallant knight and accomplished gentleman, he was always well received at the English court, and treated with much courtesy by the king and queen. Naturally, however, the count could not forget that he was a prisoner; and, expressing much anxiety to return home, he was released on his parole, and allowed to repair to France to raise the money necessary to pay his ransom.

Accordingly, the constable, little dreaming of the consequences, embarked for France, and, reaching the coast, made his way to Paris, and presented himself to the new king, whose father he had faithfully served. Whether or not he was really guilty of any disloyalty towards the House of Valois is difficult to decide. It was rumoured, however, that he confessed something of the kind to Walter de Brienne, Duke of Athens; and one Tuesday, when in the Hôtel de Nesle, he was suddenly arrested by the Provost of Paris, and imprisoned.

The constable was not long kept in suspense. Indeed, John of Calais dealt with the Count of Eu almost as

summarily as Geoffrey de Chargny had dealt with Aymery de Pavie. On Thursday, about the hour of matins, he was conducted to the courtyard of the Hôtel de Nesle, and there, in presence of several earls and knights, be-headed as a traitor.

If John exhibited courage in the execution of the constable, he showed little of that prudence which he might have learned from reflecting on the fate of his father. The constable, as he well knew, was the King of England's prisoner, released on parole; and Edward would have belied his reputation if he had allowed his death to pass without demanding satisfaction. It soon appeared that the Plantagenet was in no humour to be set at defiance. When the news reached England, he made no secret of his intention to treat John as he had treated Philip, John's father.

"Ho, ho!" exclaimed the king, as his anger rose and his eye flashed, "my adversary's son has put the Count of Eu to death. By good St. George! when this truce expires, I will show him how I can avenge the execution of my prisoners on parole."

CHAPTER XLV

RENEWAL OF THE WAR

It was not only the King of England whose enmity John of Valois, after taking possession of the throne of France, had provoked by indulging his vindictive temper. Hardly had he assumed the symbols of royalty, when, by neglecting to pay his daughter's dowry, he involved himself in a bitter quarrel with his son-in-law, whose friendship it was his interest to cultivate even at some sacrifice of pride.

Now this son-in-law happened to be no less remarkable a personage than the King of Navarre, who was also Count of Evreux, and who was known as Charles the Bad; and he at once proved himself a potent and unscrupulous foe. In fact, when his personal enemy,

Charles de la Cerda, was appointed Constable of France, the King of Navarre showed his contempt for the authority of the King of France by seizing the constable at Aigle, and putting him to death; and, when cited before a Bed of Justice to answer for the crime, he gathered around him the Norman nobles, who were his friends and partisans, and set the royal summons at defiance. The quarrel, however, was accommodated, and a reconciliation took place. But between two such men there could not be any lasting amity. The King of Navarre was ever thwarting his father-in-law's government, and John accused his son-in-law of doing many things contrary to the honour of the crown and the welfare of the realm. At length John took his kinsman at advantage, and a step which brought matters to a crisis.

And the occasion was not ill-chosen for his purpose. Charles, the dauphin, having been invested with the duchy of Normandy, repaired to Rouen to take possession; and, in the great hall of the castle, he gave a feast to the King of Navarre, to John, Count of Harcourt, Navarre's favourite, and to other Norman nobles who were Navarre's friends. Suddenly, in the midst of the feast, John, who had ridden from Chartres with his marshal and his armed guards, entered the banqueting hall, and caused the whole party, with the exception of the dauphin, to be arrested and shut up in various chambers. Having then sat down at table, and leisurely dined, he ordered the Count of Harcourt and four other nobles to be carted to a field behind the castle, and executed before his eyes. Next day, after placing their heads on a gibbet in Rouen, he set out for Paris, carrying with him the King of Navarre, whom he imprisoned in the Louvre.

But it speedily appeared that he had acted rashly. Avengers instantly sprang up in the person of Philip of Navarre and Godfrey Harcourt. Philip of Navarre was brother of the incarcerated king, and Count of Longueville; Godfrey Harcourt was uncle of the beheaded count, and the same Norman baron who, in 1346, acted as marshal of the English army, and guided the English to the very gates of Paris. Both of them immediately

entered into an alliance with Edward, acknowledged him as King of France, and did homage to him as such; and it became evident that John had drawn on the kingdom, whose destinies he had aspired to sway, a storm the effects of which were likely to be felt as far and wide as that which his sire had caused by the murder of the Breton nobles.

Ere this the truce between England and France was reckoned among the things of the past. It was in June that the truce expired; but it was not till the reapers had done their work, and the harvest was gathered into the barns, that England began to arm for a renewal of the war. Then, however, no time was lost. Three armies were mustered, and destined to attack France from different quarters. The first, under the king, was to land at Calais; the second, under the Prince of Wales, in Gascony; and the third, under the Earl of Derby, in Normandy, to co-operate with Philip of Navarre and Godfrey Harcourt.

In the autumn Edward landed with his force at Calais, having taken with him his two sons, Lionel of Antwerp and John of Gaunt, that they might see something of real war. But in this the young princes were disappointed. The king, indeed, marched twenty-two leagues into the country; and, reaching Hesdin, a strong town in Artois, he destroyed the outworks. But no enemy appeared to give him battle; and, finding that the country was wasted, and that an army could not be subsisted in its march, he was fain to return to Calais, and soon after found it prudent to abandon the idea of operations, and embark for England.

More fortunate than the king's expedition, but, like his, without glory, was that of the Prince of Wales. It was the month of October when the young hero landed in Gascony and raised his banner. Advancing as far as Toulouse, he there crossed the Garonne, and threw his army upon Languedoc. His enterprise was perilous; for the King of France had sent thither the Count of Armagnac with a force much superior in number; but the prince, far from being daunted by the intelligence, pushed on the more boldly, attacked Carcassonne, marched on to

Narbonne, and, over-running the country without his foes showing their faces, returned to Bordeaux with much plunder and a host of prisoners.

Hardly had France recovered from the alarm created by the landing of the King and the Prince of Wales when the Earl of Derby debarked his fighting men on the coast of Normandy, and, entering the country of Coutantin, commenced operations in conjunction with Philip of Navarre and Godfrey Harcourt. At first the English earl and the Norman lords carried everything before them, taking towns and castles as they went. But their force did not exceed four thousand men; and when John, raising a large body of men-at-arms and infantry, came to the rescue of his adherents, the Earl of Derby, who was then at Verneuil, found it prudent to depart from that place, and, passing Aigle, made for Tubœuf.

Meanwhile, John, hurrying through Condé, marched straight to Verneuil, and followed the earl to Tubœuf. But there he halted, and, being informed that he could not, with advantage, pursue farther, as there were immense forests, in which the English and their allies could find refuge, he turned back, and, after taking all the towns and castles in Lower Normandy which belonged to the King of Navarre as Count of Evreux, he returned to Paris, congratulating himself on the success of his expedition. But, meantime, John's enemies were preparing for fresh enterprises; and he, ere long, received intelligence which kindled his ire.

"Sire," said a French knight, whose appearance proved the speed with which he had been riding, "I bring you tidings of your enemies."

"Ah!" exclaimed John eagerly. "Where are they?"

"It is of the young Prince of Wales I would speak, sire," continued the knight, who, knowing his master's fiery temper, was not without apprehension as to the effect which his communication might produce.

"Well, the young Prince of Wales," said John—"what of him?"

"Sire," replied the knight, hesitating no longer, "the Prince of Wales has left Bordeaux, and his army is fast advancing towards the fertile country of Berry."

“Berry!” cried John, stamping with rage. “By God and St. Denis! I will make him rue his audacity. I will go against him without a day’s delay; and woe to him; for I swear, by all the saints, to give him battle whenever and wherever I can find him.”

CHAPTER XLVI

A TOWN LOST AND WON

It was not my fortune to accompany the Prince of Wales in that expedition which, in the autumn of 1355, he made in the South of France. At this time I was with the King of England, at Calais, and engaged in the enterprise which circumstances, not under his control, compelled him to abandon, after reaching Hesdin and destroying the outworks.

Nevertheless, on Edward’s return to Calais, it seemed that there was still some hope of the French once more bearding the lion of Cressy. In fact, John of Valois summoned an army to assemble at Amiens, and, advancing as far as St. Omer, sent his marshal to challenge the king to a general battle. But events proved that the French were not in earnest, and that the challenge was sent for no other purpose than to keep the king inactive at Calais until preparations could be made for the Scots crossing the Tweed, and ravaging the North of England, so as to compel Edward to cross the seas, and hasten to the rescue of his subjects.

At this crisis I was all vigilance; and, having my suspicions that John of Valois was playing the game which his sire had attempted with so little success, I exercised all my ingenuity to gain intelligence. My efforts were not in vain; and one day, while the king, still under the delusion that he was to have an opportunity of combating his enemies, was in the courtyard of Calais Castle, with his sons, Lionel and John, and looking on while the young princes were diverting themselves with chivalrous exercises, I carried to him the alarming intelligence that John of Valois, in order to induce his allies of Scotland

to make a diversion in his favour, had despatched to that country a knight, named Eugène de Garentière, with sixty picked men-at-arms, and forty thousand crowns to be expended in mustering an army.

On hearing of this new danger, Edward entered the castle, and, after duly considering the matter, ordered me to depart instantly to England, to make with all speed to the North, and to warn Sir John Copeland to draw fighting men together, to exercise the utmost vigilance against surprise, and to be ready in case of a regular invasion, to take steps for giving the Scots battle.

“But,” said the king, “it is rather a surprise than any regular invasion that I apprehend; for, after the result of their march to Durham, and their rout at Neville’s Cross, they will shrink from any great enterprise, and recur to their old system of making sudden and rapid inroads.”

I embarked for England without loss of time; and, so far as I was concerned, no delay occurred in the execution of the king’s behest. But I was all too late to prevent mischief. As Edward had foreseen, the Scots did not occupy themselves with extensive preparations. Having shared the French crowns among them, the chief nobles and Robert Stuart, who acted as guardian of Scotland during the captivity of the King of Scots, determined on an immediate incursion, and accordingly sent a force to the Border, under Lord Douglas and Sir William Ramsay, a knight of prowess and courage.

But the Scots were cautious. In order to insure success it was necessary to resort to stratagem; and, well knowing that such was the case, Douglas, on reaching the Merse, halted at a place called Nisbet Moor, and sent forward Ramsay with a body of horse, who, fording the Tweed, pushed as far as Norham, burned the little town, defied the castle, and then, pretending to fly, allured Sir Thomas Dacre and an English force over the Border and into the Merse, and ultimately, fighting as they went, to Nisbet Moor, where, ready for action, the main body of the Scots lay in ambush.

And no sooner, indeed, did Dacre and his band reach this place than the Scots sprang upon them and made a fierce attack, with shouts of “Douglas! Douglas for

ever! Ye shall die, ye thieves of England!" It was in vain that the English struggled against the numbers opposed to them. Surprised and surrounded, they were speedily overcome; and Dacre, after killing Haliburton and Turnbull, two Scottish knights of consequence, was forced to yield and surrender his sword.

Elate with this advantage, such as it was, the Scots determined to pursue their success. But they coveted something more substantial than barren honour, and, eager for spoil, they turned their eyes towards Berwick.

Natural it was that the Scots should have bethought themselves of the town which, at the beginning of his reign, and after his victory at Halidon, Edward had torn from their grasp; for, as a stronghold in English hands, it was to them an awkward neighbour. Not only did it form a formidable barrier in the East Marches to the incursions of the Scots, but checked their operations in other quarters; and the boldest of them shrank from the consequences of an inroad by the Middle or West Marches, when they reflected on the probability of the Captain of Berwick sallying forth in retaliation, at the head of his garrison, and sweeping the country to the gates of Edinburgh.

And, in another respect, it was a tempting prize; for the king, eager to repair the injuries sustained by its trade during the Scottish wars, had granted the town great privileges; and, availing themselves of their privileges, the townsmen had grown prosperous and rich. Such being the case, the Scots felt that there was nowhere a better chance of booty.

At this time Sir Alexander Ogle was Captain of Berwick, and Sir Robert Boynton governor of the castle. Neither of them seems to have been apprehensive of danger, and probably both of them deemed the place perfectly secure, even in case of an assault being attempted. On the first point, however, they deceived themselves, and on the second they forgot that they had to deal with men no less crafty than courageous.

It was late in the year 1355, and Thomas Stuart, who called himself Earl of Angus, having collected a fleet, embarked with a multitude of armed men, and on a dark night sailed into the mouth of the Tweed. The hour

favoured his adventure. It was just as the first dawn of returning day was perceptible, and the town was hushed in repose, that the Scots, accompanied by Garentière and his Frenchmen, disembarked on the northern bank of the river, and moved stealthily and unobserved to the foot of the walls. Reaching a part called the Cowgate, and making use of scaling ladders, they climbed the walls, and, overpowering the sentinels, leaped into the town. But at this stage of affairs the alarm was sounded, and Ogle, rousing his men, appeared to oppose them sword in hand. A desperate conflict then took place in the streets and lanes; and the Scots, after slaying Ogle and two other English knights, remained masters of the town. But the Scots had purchased their victory dearly. Even taken at advantage, and overborne by numbers, the reputation which that famous garrison enjoyed had been well maintained. In yielding to numbers, they had proved their valour and prowess; and, when the sun rose and revealed the carnage, the conquerors found that, in the encounter, they had lost six knights of note, besides a host of inferior men.

Moreover, Ogle's resistance had been of infinite service to the inhabitants, for great, as may be supposed, was their consternation when they became aware that the Scots were upon them. Roused from sleep, and springing from their beds, the townsmen carried off the women and children, and ran for their lives in terror and despair. Some escaped by the gates, others ran to the castle; and the Scots found themselves in possession of the wealth, the thought of which had excited their cupidity and stimulated their ardour.

But the situation of the Scots was not, in all respects, pleasant. The castle held sternly out, and all their efforts to take it proved failures. Moreover, the garrison sent to ask the counsel and aid of Copeland; and, in concert with him, a plan was formed for introducing into the castle a number of English warriors, who might enter the town by what was called Douglas Tower, and recover the place by strength of hand.

However well conceived, the project came to naught. By some process intelligence of what was passing reached

the Scots ; and, on learning the intentions of the garrison, and after having been masters of Berwick for a week, they hastened to seize the Douglas Tower. Having done so, with the assistance of Garentière and his Frenchmen, they defended both town and tower so resolutely that no impression could be made.

But matters could not possibly remain as they were, and John of Valois soon had reason to congratulate himself on the success of Garentière's mission. So great was the importance of Berwick, that Edward, on hearing how affairs were, abandoned his schemes on the Continent, and embarked for England, to take measures for the recovery of the place, and, after staying three days in London, set out on his way northward.

It was on an early day in January, 1356, when the king, having kept his Christmas in Newcastle, and summoned the fighting men of the North to his standard, came before Berwick at the head of his army, accompanied by his two sons and Sir Walter Manny, while his fleet appeared in the Tweed. Repairing to the castle, while Manny set miners brought from Dean Forest to work, Edward prepared to let down the drawbridge and attack the town from the castle, while Sir Walter, with the aid of the miners of Dean, was employed in advancing a mine below the walls. But a brief period proved that neither operation was necessary. Indeed, when the Scots perceived the combination of art and force that was to be used against them, the sight was enough. With one voice they cried that it was time to surrender, and only begged that they might be permitted to march out with safety of life and limb.

Not wishing to drive matters between himself and the Scots to extremity, Edward, indignant and angry, as he might well be, at their unprovoked aggression, granted their prayer ; and terms of capitulation having been agreed to, they were allowed to march out and return to their own country.

Nevertheless, after Berwick had in this way been lost and won, and when the townsmen, returning to their homes, complained loudly of the injuries they had sustained, the King of England considered it expedient to

take precautions against future inroads ; and, leaving men to garrison the town and repair the fortifications, he set out for the castle of Roxburgh, where he was to hold a conference with Edward Baliol, who, as legitimate heir of the ancient Kings of Scotland, still claimed the Scottish throne.

CHAPTER XLVII

“A DOUGLAS!”

AT the castle of Roxburgh, situated hard by the confluence of the Tweed and the Teviot, and the scene of many a royal festival in the days of William the Lion and the Alexanders, the King of England remained for some time, revolving his plans for the settlement of Scotland ; and there Baliol, now an old man and childless, and unprepared to assert his hereditary right to the crown and kingdom, made it over to Edward by formally delivering the crown which had been placed on his head at Scone, and some of the soil of the kingdom which his ancestors had enjoyed, and, at the same time, declared him heir to all the estates of the house of Baliol on both sides of the Tweed.

This ceremony, which was not destined to have much influence on the course of events, took place in the presence of the Bishop of Durham and the Abbots of Melrose and Dryburgh ; and the king, learning that the Scots had assembled to oppose his progress, prepared to raise the banner of Scotland and march against them.

But it was generally the habit of the warriors of Scotland to conceal their movements ; and Edward, having on this occasion only a vague idea in what direction the Scots were to be found, and becoming eager for intelligence, ordered that two squires should ride forth and reconnoitre. Accordingly I was sent, in company with Robert Salle, the youth of whom I have spoken as attached to Aymery de Pavie when Governor of Calais, with instructions to discover, if possible, at all risks, where the Scots were to be found.

Between Salle and myself a close friendship had sprung into existence during Edward's expedition to Calais ; and as both of us had emerged from obscurity, and as we both

owed to our skill and courage what reputation we enjoyed, we naturally sympathised on many points. But I did not fully share the antipathy which, in his more dreary moods, he, as the son of a mason, felt for men who had inherited high names and great possessions; and as I sometimes, under the influence of imagination, talked as if there was a gulf between us, we could not always avoid discussions of a more warm kind than was agreeable. On the present occasion our tendency in this respect was destined to lead us into an awkward predicament.

As may be supposed, our mission was not without perils, which only the utmost vigilance could guard against; and, considering how little we knew of the country, we certainly should have remembered our danger. But, young and adventurous, we thought lightly of the hazard as we rode on through mud and mire. At first we examined every hill and dale with searching eyes. But, when no human being appeared, we became more careless, and it was not till after pursuing our way for hours, and as we were skirting an extensive wood, that I instinctively felt that danger might be nigh.

“Beshrew me if I like the aspect of this place!” exclaimed I suddenly. “I would that Copeland, our northern hero, or some man familiar with the country, were here to guide us safely!”

“By St. George!” replied Salle, “I confess I begin to be somewhat alarmed; but, be the peril what it may, we hazard nothing but our lives.”

“True,” said I; “but life has its sweets, and I am not yet so weary of mine as to feel indifferent to the possibility of losing it—least of all, needlessly; for, as the Orientals say, there is no hope of living again, seeing that man is not a water-melon, and that, when once in the ground, he cannot grow again.”

“And yet,” remarked Salle, “I have heard that ancient sages were wont to say, ‘Let no man be envied till his death;’ and, for my own part, I see not how a warrior could better die than for his king and country.”

“A noble sentiment, doubtless,” said I, “and one to be carefully cherished; but methinks it is better to live to serve one’s king and country in manhood and age than

to die uselessly for them in youth. Moreover, you know, I have still to penetrate the mystery of my birth, and that is a motive for wishing to live.”

“Tush!” exclaimed Salle querulously; “why harp for ever on that string? What matters it what has been a man’s birth, if his heart is noble and his hand strong?”

“Little, mayhap,” I replied; “still, I would fain have the consciousness of an interest in the past, and be at the bottom of the mystery, the solution of which might give me such an interest.”

“You never will penetrate your mystery,” said he in a conclusive tone.

“Now,” replied I, repressing an angry feeling that stirred in my breast, “I hold not with you; for few secrets can escape an investigator who pursues the inquiry with determination; and it ever seems to me that there is a voice telling me that the truth which I pant to learn will one day be revealed; and, therefore, I continue the search after it with the ardour of a Knight of the Round Table in quest of the Sangreal.”

“And what, I pray you, was the Sangreal?” asked Salle with a sneer.

“Nothing less than the sacred vessel from which the Redeemer of Mankind and his disciples ate the last supper,” replied I, crossing myself devoutly; “and which Joseph of Arimathea brought, with the spear used at the crucifixion, when he came to England to convert the inhabitants to Christianity, and planted, near the abbey of Glastonbury, the miraculous thorn which blossoms every year at Christmas.”

“And did the Knights of the Round Table succeed in their quest of this Sangreal?” inquired Salle.

“Yes, in truth did they,” answered I, proud of my lore; “it was at length achieved by a knight named Galahad, aided by Sir Bors and Sir Percival, both champions of high renown in Christendom.”

“On my faith,” said Salle, almost contemptuously, “I never heard the names of these knights before, nor do I hold myself the less cheap that their names were unknown to me.”

"And on my faith," exclaimed I, provoked to anger, "I did not deem that in England there existed a single aspirant to fame in arms who had not heard of the Sangreal."

"You forget that I was not reared daintily in kings' palaces," rejoined he, "but in a camp."

I bit my lip and refrained from replying to the taunt, but, as I thought of Cressy and Neville's Cross, my heart swelled with indignation.

It must by this time have been four o'clock, and we had been riding for hours without catching sight or hearing tidings of the enemy; when, just as this dialogue terminated, and we were turning a corner of the wood we had been skirting, we suddenly saw, before our eyes, an army marching northward. Reining instantly up, we drew back to escape observation, and as the winter sun, which was setting, flashed upon crested helms and rows of spears, the spectacle was inspiring.

"Now," said I, pointing to the retreating host, "let him that is weary of life try a jeopardy."

"On my faith," replied Salle bluntly, "to me it seems that we are in sufficient jeopardy where we are;" and, pointing to a horseman who emerged from the wood, he added, "let us fly."

"It is too late," said I, looking round in alarm. "See you not that we are circumvented?" And as I spoke we were surrounded on all sides; for the horseman was a knight, and with him he had not fewer than thirty lances.

"Who are you?" asked the knight, riding forward and roughly seizing my rein; "speak, sirrah."

"Sir knight," answered I, endeavouring to be calm, "my comrade rejoices in the name of Robert Salle, and men call me Arthur Winram; and we are squires of England."

"On my troth," he exclaimed, eyeing me as if I had been an inferior being, "you speak boldly for one of your years and condition; and for your comrade, I trow that he is not dumb, that you, albeit the younger of the two, should answer so readily for him. But say at once what is your errand, and speak truly. Otherwise you will fare the worse; for trees are more plentiful here than carrion,

and the Scottish ravens are not, for the time being, too well provided with food. Now I listen.”

“In truth, then, sir knight,” began I after a brief pause, “our errand is simple enough. We come from the camp of the English to look for the Scots.”

“And you have found us,” exclaimed the knight with a hoarse laugh; “and by St. Bride!” added he, “let me comfort you with the assurance that you shall not leave us at your pleasure.”

“Gramercy for your courtesy, sir knight,” replied I, my spirit rising. “And since you so relish our company, albeit our acquaintance is somewhat of the briefest, deign to say, I pray you, into whose hands we have had the fortune to fall.”

“My name is Douglas,” replied the knight sternly; “a name at which Englishmen are wont to tremble.”

“Faith, sir knight,” said I, with a smile which I doubt not was provoking, “if Englishmen ever were afflicted with that failing, they have had time to recover from it since Dupplin, and Halidon, and Neville’s Cross.”

“Varlet!” exclaimed the knight, his anger rising high, “bandy not such words with me, before whose father’s sword Englishmen were wont to fly as deer before the hounds.”

And in truth, as I afterwards learned, the knight was Archibald Douglas, the illegitimate son of him whom the Scots called “the good Sir James,” and who, while on the way to Palestine with the heart of Bruce, was slain by the Saracens in Spain; and I, moreover, learned that the knight himself meditated an early pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

But at the moment I knew nothing of Archibald Douglas save the name, and that we were his prisoners. Giving us into the custody of his companions, he charged them to conduct us to a castle, the name of which I did not catch, to guard us well, and not, as they valued their lives, to allow us to escape.

“The varlets,” he said, “have, if I mistake not, seen more than they would care to tell, and could give their king—upon whose head may my curse rest, now and for ever—such intelligence as would enable him to defeat all

our plans." And as the knight spoke he rode off, with the greater part of his followers, towards the Scottish army, while we, under the escort of six of his men-at-arms, took our way towards the castle which was destined to be the scene of our captivity.

CHAPTER XLVIII

BURNT CANDLEMAS

It was said of the first Edward, that, while figuring conspicuously between a weak father and a wilful son, he needed no such foils to set forth his real worth; that, personally as well as intellectually, he towered above his fellows; that his step was another man's stride; that he was most judicious in all his undertakings, being equally wise to plot as valiant to perform; that, under Divine Providence, he was happy in success, at sea and on land, at home and abroad; and that, in all his actions, he proved himself capable of governing, not England only, but the whole world. Moreover, it is said that he was so fortunate with his sword at the opening of his reign, that, ere the close, he awed all his enemies with his scabbard, and the renown of his exploits; and if the praises bestowed on the first Edward cannot, on all points, with justice be rendered to the third, it is due to the memory of the hero of Halidon and Cressy to say that, after passing the thirty-fifth year of his life, he was one whose name was so terrible to his enemies—both French and Scots—that they would no more have thought of facing him in pitched battle than they would have thought of encountering his illustrious grandsire.

It was, therefore, with sensations the reverse of agreeable that the guardian and chief men of Scotland learned that Edward had reached Roxburgh with a formidable force. In fact, supposing that the king would shirk the hardships of a winter's campaign north of the Tweed, and anticipating that, after restoring the fortifications of Berwick, he would return to his capital, they drew to a head, and prepared, as soon as he turned his face

southward, to renew their predatory incursions. On finding how much they were mistaken in their calculations, they resolved on leaving the country to its fate, and withdrawing, with what valuables they could remove, to the region lying beyond the Firth.

But, in order to carry their plan into execution, the Scots felt that it was necessary to gain time, and with this view they resorted to a device which did them little credit. In fact, they deliberately sent ambassadors to the king at Roxburgh, with proposals from Lord Douglas and other nobles to treat about submitting to his authority; and, having by this trick obtained a respite of hostilities, they employed the time in laying waste the country, and in accomplishing their removal to what was a place of comparative safety. Having done so, they were mad enough to exasperate the king by sending him a defiance.

It was rashly done, as the event proved too clearly. No sooner did Edward discover the trick that had been played upon him than he expressed the utmost indignation; and, when he received the message of defiance, his anger was fierce. Arraying his army in three divisions, the king left Roxburgh, with the banner of Scotland displayed before him, and a determination to make the country which had defied his power feel the weight of his hand. Advancing as far as Edinburgh, he there halted, and, indulging in the expectation that the guardian and Scottish nobles would pluck up courage to give him battle, awaited their coming; but those patriotic magnates, having exposed their countrymen to the utmost peril, thought only of their own safety, and left others to suffer, as they best could, all the horrors of war.

Meanwhile, the plight of Edward was not enviable. No provisions were to be had for love or money, and the fighting men of England, who when at home never drank water save by way of penance, had no other drink for fifteen days. Still, the king had the prospect of supplies; for his fleet, laden with provisions and necessaries, was expected to arrive in the Firth. But the elements proved hostile to the invaders. A violent storm arose, and the wind, blowing from the north, drove back and dispersed

the ships so effectually, that the English lost all hope of being relieved by sea, and indicated a decided wish to turn their faces towards Berwick.

By this time, indeed, matters had reached such a stage that Edward had no alternative ; and he gave orders for a retreat. Accordingly the army began its march southward, and the Scots had every prospect of getting rid of the invaders on cheap terms. But they had not learned to leave well alone. Day by day, and night by night, the retreating army was harassed by small parties ; and so dexterous were the Scots in this kind of warfare, that not an Englishman could straggle from the ranks without the certainty of being cut off.

The king, whose blood now boiled with rage, expressed the utmost resentment ; and, no longer making any effort to keep his temper, he discharged his wrath on the country through which he passed. Every town that lay in his way, whether great or small, was given to the flames ; every village was reduced to ashes ; and, for about twenty miles from the sea-coast, the country for a long period bore such traces of the conflagration, that the Scots have continued to describe the February of that season as Burnt Candlemas, in memory of the devastation which the English then wrought, while departing in anger from a land which they could not conquer.

For a time the Scots appeared bent on retaliation ; and during the winter, notwithstanding Copeland's vigilance, they set many a Northumbrian village in a blaze. But the year was fruitful of events of which they little dreamt when, at the instance of John of Valois, they mounted their horses, fought at Nisbet Moor, and seized upon Berwick.

Ere Candlemas again came round great changes had occurred, and the continental ally to whom they had been so servile was too poor to bribe, and too powerless to succour. It was now February, and before October a great battle had been fought, and a great victory had been won, which prostrated the energies of France, daunted the ferocious spirit of Scotland, and rendered England even more celebrated than before, not only throughout Christendom, but among the Saracens and the nations of

the East, as the cradle of heroes and the nursery of conquerors.

And there arose circumstances in considering which the Scots deemed it prudent to refrain from inroads, and Edward, even if he had felt a wish, had no occasion to chastise their audacity. Never, indeed, after the spring of 1356, did the king engage in war with that obstinate and refractory nation. It is possible that, even at that period, and while pursuing the enterprise, he was tired of struggles which could not be brought to a satisfactory issue; and that he was in reality bidding "Farewell to Scotland" when he left them to celebrate a "Burnt Candlemas."

CHAPTER XLIX

OUR CAPTIVITY

It was not in the direction taken by the Scottish army that we were conducted as prisoners by the Scottish men-at-arms, but to a castle standing on the banks of a stream called the Leader, and hard by the tower within the walls of which, in the thirteenth century, dwelt Thomas of Ercildoun, a bard of mighty fame, who enjoyed the reputation of being gifted with a prophetic faculty, and who is said, while at supper in the castle of Dunbar, to have predicted the death of Alexander, King of Scots, and who, on being asked when the war in Scotland would come to an end, answered, "When the cultivated country shall become forest; when wild beasts shall inhabit the abodes of men; when the Scots shall not be able to escape the English, should they crouch as hares in their form; and when they shall be drowned in their flight for fault of ships."

As we approached Mount Moreville, which, in earlier days, was the castle of Hugh de Moreville, a great Norman noble, who figured as Constable of Scotland, and founded the abbey of Dryburgh, and as we rode through the village that had risen under the protection of the stronghold of the Morevilles, night had for some time

some standing by the fire that burned on the hearth and blazed up the huge chimney, were playing dice, and talking boastfully enough of their feats in love and war. On seeing us, however, they, with one accord, moved to the middle of the floor and stared at us, smiling and whispering to each other, and displaying more curiosity than was agreeable to my comrade.

"Gallants!" growled Salle, patting the heads of two hounds that had roused themselves and risen from their recumbent posture on our entrance, "have you before never seen an English prisoner, that you stare at us as if we were elephants or camels, or beasts of prey? By good St. George, I err grievously if you would not be more shy of approaching were we but mounted on our horses and armed with swords."

It seemed that the language in which Salle conveyed his question and uttered his comment was not comprehended by the Frenchmen; for they merely looked at each other and shook their heads. Suddenly, however, the countenance of Lancelot de Lorris was lighted up with a smile of surprise, and the young knight, who, I observed, bore a chain on his arm to indicate that he was under thralldom to his chivalrous vow, stepped forward.

"By our lady of Rybamont!" said he, addressing me, "it seems to me, gentle squire, that we have met before."

"It may so have chanced, sir knight," replied I, speaking in his own tongue, and with studied courtesy, for I wished to make amends for my comrade's growl, "but, if so, my memory serves me not as to time and place."

"Ah!" said Sir Lancelot, shaking his head gravely, "it was at a time which no warrior of France can recall but with sadness, and at a place which, credit me, I long again to behold as an exile the home whence he had been banished—the castle of Corbie."

"I now remember me," replied I, and not without a flush of pride; for on that day I had won some renown as the champion of imperilled ladies.

"And trust me," said Sir Lancelot cordially, and with

a tear in his eye—for it was one of the ladies of Poix to whom he pledged his love, and in whose honour he was eager to do noble deeds—“there are many, myself among the number, who remember how chivalrously you did your devoir as an aspirant to chivalry, and, by our lady of Rybamont! were you here free, and at liberty to do as you liked, instead of a prisoner, naught would please me better than on the morrow to mark my esteem for your valour by indulging you with an encounter outside the barriers of this castle for death or life.”

“Gramercy, sir knight,” replied I, laughing heartily, “you over-estimate my prowess when you deem me worthy of such a distinction: and yet,” added I, “should we chance to meet in time to come on some field where French and English men struggle for renown and victory, in no wise could I imagine good St. George favouring me more highly than by placing me face to face and hand to hand with a warrior at once so courteous and so brave.”

Smiling, as if pleased with the answer, Sir Lancelot de Lorris showed that, however readily he would, under other circumstances, have given me a passport to another world, he was not indifferent to my comfort in this. Leading myself and my comrade to the huge chimney, he did everything to console us in our captivity, and his example was not lost on his countrymen, who stood around breaking jests on the poverty of the land and the badness of the fire.

“By my faith,” said John de Helennes, a squire of France, “the night is raw and cold; and my very bones seem to freeze.”

“In truth,” remarked another French squire, known as Eustace the Strong—who prided himself on being like that King of France called Pepin le Bref, whom he did resemble in this at least, that, though his stature was small, his strength was enormous—“Scotland is not a country to be in during winter. I never knew what hard living was till now.”

“But certes,” said John de Helennes, “that is no reason why we should have such a fire in such weather; for, being but now in the courtyard, I saw several asses

driven in, laden with billets of wood for the use of the garrison."

"Holy Mary!" exclaimed Eustace with a look of indignation. "Do you tell me that fuel in plenty is so near, and that warriors of France are left to starve in the cold? Shame upon us if we right not ourselves in such a case."

And, as the strong Frenchman spoke, he sallied forth to the courtyard, seized one of the asses with panniers, carried it into the hall, and, pushing towards the chimney, flung the ass and its load, with its feet uppermost, on the dogs of the hearth, to the great delight of the bystanders, who, with the exception of Sir Lancelot, overlooked the cruelty of the action, and applauded the display of strength.

By this time our term of reprieve was at an end; and, arrangements having meanwhile been made for lodging us securely, we, after taking leave of Sir Lancelot, were conducted up a flight of stone stairs, and into a dimly-lighted chamber, with huge doors and narrow windows, the strong bolts and strong gratings of which seemed to forbid every thought of escape.

"My malison on Dame Fortune for playing us this scurvy trick," said my companion, as the gaoler departed, drawing bolt and bar carefully behind him. "If there is anything I have ever dreaded more than I have hated Scot and Frenchman, it has been the thought of captivity; and now here we are, mewed in an enemy's stronghold, without hope of freedom, and in the hands of men belonging to the nations I have ever detested."

"My friend," replied I soothingly, "be patient, I intreat you, and speak not of being without hope; captivity is the hard fate of many a brave warrior; and circumstances can open stronger doors than the one which bars us from liberty."

But days and weeks passed over, and winter went, and spring came, and the fields became green, and the leaves appeared on the trees, and we learned that the King of England and his army had returned home, and we were still prisoners, when, one day, an event occurred which lent something like novelty to our existence, and stimu-

lated me in some efforts I had made to gratify our anxiety to escape.

I have said that Sir Lancelot de Lorris had vowed to perform certain deeds of chivalry against the garrison of Roxburgh, and no sooner had King Edward left the country than he began to make excursions with the object of accomplishing his vow. Pushing up one day to the stronghold, of which Sir John Copeland was governor, the French knight adventured so far as to strike upon the gate of the fortress and defy the garrison. On that day Copeland had left the castle to exercise his functions of Sheriff of Northumberland, and no notice was taken of the French knight's bravado. But when the Governor of Roxburgh returned, and learned what had occurred, he lost no time in returning the visit.

It was a day in spring, and the sun was shining pleasantly on pool and stream, when I, looking between the strong iron gratings that secured the window of our prison, observed a knight, accompanied by a band of horsemen, approach the castle, and hover on the lee outside the barriers in an attitude of defiance. I had no difficulty in recognising Copeland, and, entertaining little doubt as to the errand on which he had come, I called the attention of Salle to his presence, and awaited the result of his adventure with almost breathless interest.

Nor was Copeland long kept waiting. Elate with the anticipation of encountering so hardy a knight, Sir Lancelot, on hearing that the Governor of Roxburgh requested a tilt, immediately accepted the challenge, and, arraying himself for combat, sallied out, attended by Eustace the Strong and the other Frenchmen, all armed and mounted.

I have seldom beheld a more handsome cavalier than Sir Lancelot looked on this occasion, as, with his pennon displayed, he rode through the barriers with his target on his neck and a lance in his hand, full of gaiety and joyous with the prospect of conflict.

Meanwhile, Copeland, having looked to his saddle-girths, laid his lance in rest, and answered Sir Lancelot's cry of "Our lady of Rybamont!" with a shout of "St. George for England!" Then trumpets sounded, and the two champions rushed against each other. In this course,

and in the second which they ran, both charged gallantly, and neither could be said to have any advantage over his antagonist; and, as their targets rang with a clash as they met, their companions shouted applause at their skill, and even I could not refrain from clapping my hands.

But when the English and French knights wheeled their coursers, and, charging for a third time, met with a furious onset, the result was far different. For a moment, so fierce was the shock that it was impossible to perceive what had occurred. But soon all doubt was at an end. Copeland had been so forcibly struck on his helmet that he bent back and shook in his saddle; but his spear had been driven with terrible effect; and Sir Lancelot, pierced through shield and armour, dropped from his steed with a deep and mortal wound.

On seeing the young knight fall, the French, in sore displeasure, raised a cry for revenge; and, headed by Eustace the Strong, they spurred forward to encounter their adversaries. Undauntedly, however, Copeland met them, sword in hand, smote Eustace to the earth, and, literally felling down all before him, drove them, in spite of a desperate resistance, within the barriers, and then, sheathing his sword, prepared to be gone.

"Adieu, sirs," said he, waving his hand as he turned his horse's head to regain his company. "Much it grieves me to have troubled you with my presence. But it would ill have become me, as King Edward's captain, to allow either Scot or Frenchman to strike upon the gate of a fortress committed to my keeping, without hastening, with all speed, to mark my sense of the chivalry that prompted such an adventure. Adieu! I thank you."

Some hours later our evening meal was brought by the gaoler, and I seized the opportunity to ascertain how fared those who had fallen before Copeland's weapon.

"The squire is little the worse for the clout he got," replied the gaoler. "As for the young knight, he will never see France more; he has already departed for a fairer country."

"Gone to his long home," said I, with a pang of mournful regret. "I grieve to hear it with all my heart."

"And, in good sooth, so do I," exclaimed Salle

earnestly. "I sincerely lament his fall; for, now that he is dead, I will say of him that, had he been ten times a Frenchman, he was still a gallant young knight, courteous in words, generous in thought, handsome to look at, and expert with his lance; and may Christ have mercy on his soul!"

"Amen!" added I, crossing myself. "And in truth his death is the more mournful that he seemed so much in love."

"Ay," said the gaoler, "it was woesome to see him when he lay on the rushes in the hall, and felt that he was sinking fast; he took his pennon, and giving it to John de Helennes, said, 'Take this, which is dyed with my best blood, to the lady of my love, by whom it was broidered, and tell her what has befallen me, and that, though I failed to accomplish the vow that kept me from her presence, yet I died with honour in the attempt.' And then," added the gaoler, "he laid his head on the rushes, and died."

CHAPTER L

CHASED BY BLOODHOUNDS

HAVING tasted captivity before, I was in a mood much less doleful than my comrade when I found myself confined to a dingy chamber, and cut off from communication with my countrymen, who were marching with their king in hostile array through the realm of Scotland. But ere long I began to find the confinement as irksome as it was to him, and to concentrate all my faculties on a project of escape. In order to execute it, I perceived the necessity of securing the co-operation of our gaoler.

Now it happened that this man, who went by the name of Roger Redhand, was a native of the country to the south of the Tweed; and having, years before, fled from Northumberland, after some defiance of law which exposed him to danger, he had since found safety as an exile in Scotland. Moreover, he was, though born an enemy of their nation, much trusted by the Scots among whom his lot had fallen; and they had, as a sign and

testimony of mutual treaty, gone through the ceremony of drinking with him from a cup in which some drops of their blood were mingled with his, and having by this process become, as they thought, his kinsmen in some degree, believed that they had for ever secured his fidelity.

Nevertheless, I did not by any means despair of working on the patriotism of Roger Redhand; and with great caution I ventured on the experiment. At first, however, my efforts were ineffectual. But I did not, therefore, give up the game; and Salle, whose horror of a man serving the enemies of his country was naturally intense, grew angry at my persevering with a scheme which promised no success.

"Beshrew me, friend," said he roughly, "if it angers me not sorely to condescend to parley and bandy words with that renegade. As well try to bleed a stone as to strike one spark of patriotism in his breast."

"Patience, my gallant comrade," replied I. "His love of country is not dead, but asleep; and I am far from despairing of rousing it so far, at least, as to make him the instrument of restoring us to freedom. But make not, meddle not in the matter; or, with your strong prejudices and your fiery temper, you may ruin all, and we may remain in captivity till doomsday."

And I soon after learned that Roger Redhand had seen better days; that he was son of a squire in the North of England; and I found that I was not wholly mistaken in my calculations. Dormant and difficult to arouse the exile's patriotism was, but it was not extinct; and gradually my exertions were rewarded so far that it slightly caught fire, then glowed and kindled into a flame, and ultimately, as I recalled and pictured the scenes of his youth, when Douglas and Randolph ravaged the North of England with savage fury, slaughtering and plundering the inhabitants, it burned so fiercely that I had some difficulty in restraining his impulses. But I felt so strongly the necessity of discretion, that it was I, and not he, who now hesitated. At length, however, we came to terms; and I promised him a considerable reward, and my influence to obtain a pardon for him, on

condition of his opening our prison doors, and conducting my comrade and myself in safety to the castle of Roxburgh.

At the time this bargain was struck the year was speeding on apace; and it was early May when, at murk midnight, Roger Redhand, closely muffled as Marchmen are in the habit of muffling themselves when not wishing to be recognised, cautiously unbarred the door of the chamber in which we were lodged, and whispered that the hour for the great venture was come. Without speaking a word, we rose, followed him, as he glided noiselessly down the stone stairs, and then through a postern into a wild park, that in one direction bounded the precincts of the castle. At that moment, overpowered by the darkness, and without a weapon, I confess I felt that our prospects were not inviting, and expressed something like apprehension.

"Fear not," whispered Roger Redhand, almost cheerfully; "the night favours us. I know the way so well that I could traverse it blindfold. Only one danger there is, against which there is no guarding. If our escape is discovered, and the bloodhounds are put on our track, this night may be our last, and, ere to-morrow's sun sets, our carcases may be food for ravens and wolves. But courage!"

"Ay, courage!" said I, my spirit rising. "Lead on; we follow."

No further words passed. Pursuing a south-easterly direction, Roger Redhand walked rapidly onwards, and we, not without frequently stumbling, contrived, with some exertion, to keep pace with him. Everything seemed to go prosperously; and just as the moon rose we crossed the Tweed, and, pushing resolutely on in the track of our guide, had travelled several miles when, finding we were on the bank of a rivulet, I halted to quench my thirst and recreate my energies with a draught of the pure stream.

"Now, thanks to God and good St. George for our deliverance," said I, as, refreshed, I resumed the journey; "for, at last, methinks we are safe from pursuit."

"I would fain hope so," replied our guide; "but let us

not dally with danger, nor forget the proverb which tells us not to halloo till we are out of the wood."

Almost as he spoke, Roger Redhand stopped suddenly, as if in alarm, and looking in the direction of the wind, pointed back, and, shaking his head as if to admonish us to be silent, listened attentively. For a few moments no sound broke the stillness of the night, save the rushing of the rivulet and the screams of the birds and beasts that haunted its banks. At length, however, our guide drew himself up excitedly; and now there was no possibility of mistaking the nature of the danger, or the significance of his last words. Far away as it seemed, but coming down the wind with terrible distinctness, the bay of a bloodhound, deep-mouthed and menacing, broke the silence, and sounded in our ears like a death knell.

Drawing a dagger from his bosom, and baring his strong arm, Roger Redhand deliberately inflicted a wound, and spilt some drops of blood on our track.

"What, in the name of the saints, mean you by that?" asked I.

"Blood destroys the fineness of the scent," answered he. "I have even seen prisoners sacrificed to save their captors, when closely chased by foes. But it does not always succeed. So on, on!" added our guide; "we may yet escape if we have luck."

And forward he pressed, crossing and recrossing the streamlet at places considerably distant from each other, with some idea of throwing the pursuers off the scent, but all, as it seemed, to no purpose. The sagacity of the dog was not to be baffled either by blood on the path or by the running stream. And we felt that, guided by its unerring instinct, our pursuers were close upon our track. Our fate seemed sealed; but even at that moment I scorned to yield to despair.

Nearer and nearer came the deep bay. Indeed, every time we paused to listen it resounded more loudly through the wood, and, in our perplexity, we halted to take counsel of each other.

It was an awful moment, and our agitation was great.

"We are lost!" exclaimed Salle, in accents of mournful

despondence; "and without even the satisfaction of being able to strike a blow for life."

"No, not lost," replied I, though feeling that I was hoping against hope. "It is true that great is the sagacity of the bloodhound, but not so great that it cannot be baffled by the wit of man."

"You are right," said our guide, suddenly rousing himself, and raising his head. "It can be done. I have heard the Scots tell how Robert Bruce, their king, acted when pressed as we are, and how he escaped. Have all your wits about you; let us into the water; do as you see me do; and beware, above all things, of touching the banks. Now be quick and cautious. Our lives hang on a single chance; but courage and discretion will yet save us."

By this time we had reached a wooded valley which was intersected by the stream; and, dashing into the water, our guide waded up its course for some hundred yards, while we followed in silence; and then, renewing his caution as to not touching the banks, he sprang upon the twisted branches of an elm, and, swinging himself dexterously from tree to tree, while we, with some difficulty, followed his example, at length leaped to the ground at some distance from the spot where we had entered the stream.

"Now," said he, pursuing his way and waving us on, "if you have done as I have done, and not touched the ground, we are saved."

"We are saved!" cried Salle triumphantly.

"But our escape has been a narrow one," remarked I.

And, indeed, it soon appeared that the stratagem had succeeded; and, at the same time, it became evident that we had not resorted to the stratagem a moment too soon. As, after climbing an acclivity, we reached the summit of the rising ground, the moon, previously somewhat clouded, shone brilliantly; and when, sheltered by trees from the possibility of being observed, we looked down into the valley from which we had emerged, we could distinctly descry our pursuers on horseback keenly urging on the hound, and hear their voices, as, speaking rapidly, and sometimes all at a time, they attempted to account for

having lost the scent. But all proved quite unavailing. The dog, completely thrown out, stood utterly at fault, and, in spite of incitement and encouragement, failed in every effort to regain the scent it had lost.

"Forward," whispered our guide. "By the voices of our pursuers, I know that they are dispersing to search the thickets; and since some of them might, by chance, find their way up the steep, it is not well, as I said before, to dally with danger, and it is well by hastening on to avoid the risk of being descried."

And at his instance we pursued our way with the sensations of men saved, at the last instant, from the awful peril of drowning, and keeping to by-paths and solitary places, we left danger behind, and at morn stood tired and jaded, but safe and sound, within the strong castle of which Copeland was governor.

"Welcome, gentlemen," said Copeland, who, on being informed of our escape, came to receive Salle and myself. "I rejoice you have escaped, though I am little like to have much of your company."

"And wherefore?"

"Because, whenever it is known that you are in the land of the living and at liberty, both of you are certain to have instructions to proceed south without delay to embark for Guienne. But who is the muffled man?"

"One to whom we are much indebted," said I.

"And one whose face is not wholly unknown to Sir John Copeland," said our guide, throwing aside his muffler and showing his face.

"Ah, Roger! Roger!" exclaimed Copeland in accents of sad reproof, "it grieves me to think that the day should ever have come when your father's son had to hide his face from living mortal, and that mortal an Englishman and a Copeland."

"Reproach me not with the past," said the other imploringly, "but listen to my prayer, and grant it for the sake of those who sleep where the weary are at rest."

"Yes, sir knight," said I earnestly, "upbraid him not. Let by-gones be by-gones."

"Nay," exclaimed Copeland, "I am not the person to be hard on a broken man, whose conscience, doubtless,

reproaches him often enough. And now, Roger," added he, "I listen to your prayer. What is it you require of me?"

"Your good word and influence to win me a pardon," was the answer.

The Governor of Roxburgh paused, meditated, and then, looking full at the petitioner, smiled grimly, with a peculiar expression on his countenance.

"By holy St. Cuthbert and good St. George, Roger!" said he in a low voice, "I would as lief ask King Edward for Berwick or Calais as for your pardon, as your case now stands; but," added he significantly, "if you take a pardon for the time being, and go to fight for the Prince of Wales in France, I will, for the sake of our kindred blood, equip you for the war, and even recommend you to the prince as strongly as I can in honour do, all things taken into account. Go, then, to Gascony, and fight for a pardon, while others are fighting for honour and victory, and then your day may come. Many broken ships have come to land, and, be that as it may, you were wont to be brave in the face of a foeman; and credit me that a man never asks pardon from a king with such grace as when he has proved his strength and courage against the king's enemies."

"Be it as you have said," replied the outlaw, much affected.

"And, Roger," added Copeland, "in token that I deem you capable of redeeming your good name, I, in presence of these valiant squires, give you my hand as that of a friend and kinsman, who, if you stoutly battle to redeem your fair fame, will aid your efforts to the utmost. So help me God, and St. Cuthbert, and St. George!"

And, as the Northern knight suited the action to the word, Roger Redhand's eye first gleamed with gratification, and then became dim with tears.

CHAPTER LI

AT BORDEAUX

NOT long was I allowed to linger at the castle of Roxburgh, though, at the time of my escape from Mount Moreville, there was on the borders of Scotland much work for English warriors to do. Retaliating the invasion of their country by the King of England, the Scots, scarce taking time to recover from their fright, rushed to arms and commenced their inroads, and many a Northumbrian village blazed in revenge for the havoc so recently wrought in Lothian. On the Marches men almost slept in their mail. The little barons, who held their lands and towers south of the Tweed for the service of winding a horn to intimate to the inhabitants that the Scots were approaching, had to "watch weel;" and the garrison of Roxburgh and its brave governor were often roused at dead of night to mount their horses, and contend with the assailing foe.

But, however exciting and instructive this kind of warfare might have proved, I was destined for service beyond the sea; and, leaving Copeland to struggle with the Scots, and Salle to attach himself to the garrison of Berwick, whose slumbers, like those of their neighbours, were often broken by the sound of trumpets and the war-cry of foes, I reached London, and, having been charged with letters for the Prince of Wales, I embarked for Guienne.

It was on the 1st of July that I set foot in Bordeaux, where the prince then was, and beheld, for the first time, the province of which it was regarded as the capital. Nor can I forget how pleasing was the effect which the novelty of the scene produced upon me, as I found myself in the commercial emporium of Southern France, staring with surprise at the quaint dresses of the inhabitants, and gazing with interest on the busy quays, the strong walls, the immense gates and towers, the noble castle, the broad river running round the castle walls, and the

hills beyond the city, clothed with woods and vineyards. All the various objects, presented for the first time to my view, gilded, as it were, with the summer's sun, had their charm; and, under the influence of mingled emotions, I could not but exclaim, "Who, save a coward, would not fight for such a land as this?"

It is not wonderful that, the country being such as it was—so fruitful, so productive, so pleasant, and so picturesque—the King of England was eager to retain what had been saved, and to regain what had been lost, of the bright and beautiful territory which came to his ancestor, the second Henry, with the hand of Eleanor of Guienne. But, in truth, it was not merely because the land was bright and beautiful, ever blossoming and ever perfumed, with a sunny sky and a genial climate, and shady groves and gay vineyards, appearing in the eyes of strangers a terrestrial paradise, that it haunted the imagination and stirred the ambition of our Plantagenets. Far, indeed, and quite free were these politic princes from the weakness of allowing fancy to lead them captive, when dealing with the interests of the nation with whose history all their great triumphs in war and peace were associated in the mind of Europe. Policy, not fancy, prompted their efforts to retain and recover; for rich and fertile was the region watered by the Garonne and the Adour, and of mighty importance to their island home was the trade carried on between Bordeaux and the ports of England. It was of commerce, and the wealth which commerce creates, that our English kings thought; and it was because they deemed the possession of Guienne, with that old city on the left bank of the Garonne as its capital, essential to the prosperity of the country over which they reigned, that the Plantagenets clung tenaciously to the fragment of that empire which, in the days of their ancestor, the son of Geoffrey of Anjou and the Empress Maude, had extended from the Channel to the Pyrenees.

When I reached Bordeaux, to draw my sword, under the banner of England's heir, for the right of England's king to the territory which Philip Augustus had wrested from King John, the Prince of Wales was lodged in the

abbey of St. Andrew, and his people were quartered within the city. Accordingly, I rode through the streets to the abbey, and, meeting Liulph, the archer, the companion of my struggle with the wild bull in Windsor Forest, I informed him of my desire to see the prince. Forthwith Liulph communicated my desire to a squire named Bernard, who was not without influence, and, at my request, conducted me to the presence of the young hero whose brows were, ere long, to be decked with trophies still prouder than the feather which he had won when its former owner, the blind King of Bohemia, fell in his memorable charge at Cressy.

"Welcome, Master Winram," said the prince, as I presented the letters with which I had been intrusted. "What news bring you from England?"

"Such, my lord, as it irks me to tell," replied I. "Never have the Scots been more insolent in their bearing—never more ferocious in their inroads. Again and again they have crossed the Border, burning and ravaging the country. Even now, it may be, the sky is red with the fires they have kindled in the North."

"And no sign of a truce—no prospect of a treaty?" said the prince with curiosity.

"None, my lord," answered I with emphasis. "Nor, to speak frankly," continued I earnestly, "do I opine, from what I have seen and heard, that, even if the Scots conclude truce or treaty, they will ever do so with any serious intent to be bound by one or the other, so long as their hatred of England and their predatory incursions are encouraged and rewarded by him whom they call King of France."

"Ha! by St. George!" exclaimed the prince thoughtfully, "I have for some time held such to be the case; and, if these letters from England confirm what you say, and what I believe, I know but one way that I can take to bring John of Valois to his senses, and render him powerless to bribe our enemies to destroy the life and property of Englishmen; and, by the memory of my sainted namesake who sleeps at Westminster, I will take that course, and steel my heart against compunction for the misery I may cause. For, mark you, it is only by

destroying the provinces whence John of Valois draws the wealth with which he carries on the war to my prejudice as Duke of Guienne, and to the exclusion of my lord and father from the throne of France, which is his rightful inheritance, that we can influence his actions ; and, therefore, if affairs wear not a new face ere a week passes, I have resolved, and it is my fixed purpose, to raise my banner and sally forth, and sweep the country as far, even, it may be, as the fertile province of Berry."

CHAPTER LII

THE PRINCE IN BLACK ARMOUR

ONE morning in July, 1356—orders having previously been issued that every man should be ready to march at the word of command—the trumpets of the Prince of Wales sounded, and, forthwith, all was bustle and excitement in Bordeaux. At break of day horses were saddled and warriors armed, and the leaders, having mustered the men who followed their banners, prepared to march into the provinces that owned John of Valois as King of France.

I would fain name some of the most renowned knights and nobles of Hainault, of Gascony, and England, who were with the Prince of Wales in this expedition. From Hainault were Sir Eustace d'Ambreticourt, the Lord de Guystelle, the Lord de Phaselle, and the Lord de Morbeque ; from Gascony were the Captal de Buch, the Lord d'Albret, the Lord of Pumiens, the Lord de Chaumont, and the Lord de Montferrand ; from England were Sir John Chandos, Sir Robert Knolles, Sir Walter Woodland ; James, Lord Audley ; Reginald, Lord Cobham ; Thomas, Lord Berkley ; Roger, Lord De Ov ; and the great Earls of Warwick, Oxford, Salisbury, Suffolk, and Stafford. As their armour glanced and their banners shone in the rising sun, the sight was pleasant to behold. About twelve thousand men formed the army which was to accomplish such memorable exploits. Part of these were Gascons and part English, the Gascons being much more

numerous than the English, who were, for the most part, archers and engineers qualified by experience to direct the bombards that had done good service at the siege of Calais. But both Gascons and English were then animated by a spirit of hostility against the French, and armed with equal ardour; and all were under such discipline as had never been exercised in modern warfare; for the young hero who was the soul of that army was unrivalled as a war-chief, and much had he studied how war had been carried on in the days when Rome made herself mistress of the world; and so thorough was his success, that his ranks moved with an order and precision which raised the wonder and envy of the oldest and most experienced captains of the age.

It was about this time that, in order to give *éclat* to his fair complexion, and set off his handsome countenance to advantage, the Prince of Wales assumed that black armour from which he derived the name by which he has since been popularly called; and I would fain give some notion of his appearance when, after having mounted at the monastery of St. Andrew, he rode forth to lead his army from the gates of Bordeaux. No longer the stripling who appeared at Smithfield to lend countenance to the sports of the Londoners, and who won his spurs while fighting so gallantly in the van at Cressy, the Prince of Wales was now in his sixth lustre, and had grown year by year in strength, in courage, and in comeliness. His form was tall, athletic, and finely proportioned; his face fair to look upon, and lighted up with expression and intelligence; while nothing could have been more impressive than his grand air and chivalrous bearing. Every gift he had derived from nature and inherited from his ancestors had been carefully cultivated, and it was well-nigh impossible to observe him without feeling the full truth of the words used by his father on the field of Cressy—"You are already worthy to be a king."

At the time of which I write, the chain mail worn at the Crusades and in the Barons' Wars was no longer in fashion; and the Bigods and Bohuns, and the first Edward, would have opened their eyes as wide, and stared with as much surprise, as Robert Curthose and Richard

Cœur de Lion at the garniture in which their heirs mustered at Bordeaux. Every part of the body was defended by plate armour; and from crown to toe the knight was cased in steel. Plates entirely defended the legs; and pointed shoes of overlapping steel plates guarded the feet. The leathern gauntlets were similarly cased with steel, and provided with steel tops, while on the knuckles were small spikes, knobs, and ornaments, called gadlings. A breastplate, termed a *plastron*, kept the chain shirt from pressing on the chest when the plates for breast and back, which rendered the shirt necessary, were not worn; and a short apron of chain hung from the waist over the hips. Such was the defensive armour in use during the reign of King Edward; and such was the armour worn by his hero-son. Imagine the Prince of Wales, such as I have described him, with his tall figure, his vigorous frame, his fair hair, his bright eye, his refined features, his frank expression, and his elegant air; array him in such armour as was then in fashion—but black in colour, and embossed with gold—put over all the *guipin*, or upper garment, fitting closely to the body and confined round the waist by a magnificent belt, to which his dagger was attached on one side, his sword on the other; place a golden lion on his broad breast, and a *basinet* on his high head; mount him on a steed black as a raven and somewhat fierce—and you will have before you the son of Edward and Philippa as he set forward on that enterprise which was to result in a victory never likely to be forgotten so long as skill and valour in the hour of peril, and courtesy and generosity in the hour of triumph, are held in regard by mankind.

CHAPTER LIII

THE INCURSION

IT was, as I have intimated, late in the month of July, when the Prince of Wales, marching out of Bordeaux, ascended the Garonne as far as Agen, and then, turning to the left, overran the provinces of Quercy, Limousin, and Auvergne, sparing not the country; for the object of his incursion was to weaken the French by destroying their resources, and thus bring the war to a speedy conclusion.

Rich and fertile as ever the sun shone on looked the land through which the prince rode in hostile array. It was summer, and the days were long, and bright, and merry. The harvest was well-nigh ready for the sickle. The corn was waving in the fields; the grapes were swelling on the stem; the fruit was reddening on the bough. But the invaders were in no mood to spare either corn, or grapes, or fruit. The harvest was trodden down by the horsemen; the villages and farm-houses were given to the flames; the very cattle on the hills were slaughtered; and every man who was thought rich enough to pay a ransom was taken prisoner, to be carried to Bordeaux. All this time the prince rode on at his ease, and without any opposition. When he entered any town which was well provisioned, the English rested some days to refresh themselves; and, ere taking their departure, they staved the heads of the wine-casks that were full, and burnt the wheat and oats, so that nothing was left for the enemy. It was not the Prince of Wales whom the French had to blame for all this; for their real enemies were the chiefs of the House of Valois, whom they had, in defiance of King Edward's claims, too readily recognised as their sovereigns.

Great, meanwhile, was the terror of the inhabitants. The people of Montpellier fled to Avignon to place themselves under the protection of the Pope. Trembling for his own safety, the Pope ordered his palace to be fortified and his gates to be covered with iron, and,

hoping to influence the invaders, sent, offering money, to the prince to spare Perigord.

“My father,” answered the prince, “has plenty of money, and does not want yours. But I will do no more than what I came to perform, namely, to chastise those who are in rebellion against our just rights.”

Pursuing his career of devastation, the Prince of Wales, emboldened by the success of his operations, penetrated into Berry, a province in the very heart of France. Reaching the city of Bourges, he skirmished at the gates, but without taking the place, and then passed to Vierzon, which he took by storm. But weeks had now elapsed since his departure from Bordeaux, and his incursion was talked of far and wide; and, while resting his men for three days at Vierzon, he learned, not without some slight apprehension, that John of Valois—that valiant man of war—had reached Chartres, and was about to take the field at the head of a great army, with the object of intercepting his march and giving him battle.

Not an hour did the prince lose in forming a decision as to what was to be done at this crisis. Having held a council of war, he immediately resolved to leave Vierzon, and to return, without waste of time, to Bordeaux by way of Touraine and Poitou, and with this view he marched towards Romorantin, a considerable town on the Sautre, where there was a strong castle, held for John of Valois by two warriors of renown, known as the Lord of Boucicault and the Hermit of Chaumont. The town of Romorantin, when attacked by the English van, yielded without a struggle. But this was not enough; and the prince, coming up, expressed his determination to obtain possession of the castle.

“Go,” said he to Sir John Chandos, “and hold a parley with the garrison.”

Without delay the knight proceeded to the barriers of the castle, and no sooner had he intimated that he wished to speak with those who were in command than the Lord of Boucicault and the Hermit of Chaumont came down to the bars, and declared that they were at his service.

“Gentlemen,” said Chandos, saluting them in due form, “I am sent to you by my lord the Prince of Wales,

who wishes to behave courteously towards his enemies, and says that, if you will surrender this castle and yourselves, he will show you mercy and give you good company."

"On my faith," replied the Lord of Boucicault, shaking his head and smiling, "we have no sort of inclination to accept such terms, nor to commit such an act of folly as surrendering without any necessity; and, moreover, we are able and determined to defend ourselves."

On hearing this, Chandos returned to the prince; and, on learning what was the answer, the prince ordered his men to their quarters, that they might be ready on the morrow to commence the assault. Accordingly, the marshal's trumpets having sounded at sunrise, the men-at-arms prepared themselves for action, and the archers advanced under their respective banners, and made a sharp attack on the castle. Indeed, they brought down so many enemies, and their aim was so unerring, that scarcely a French warrior ventured to show himself on the battlements; and some got on hurdles and doors, with pickaxes and mattocks in their hands, to undermine the walls. No sooner, however, did the French become aware of what was going on at the foot of the walls, than they commenced flinging large stones and pots of hot lime on the assailants; and, though the attack was resolutely persevered in, so little advantage was, for some time, gained, that the besiegers began to lose heart. At length the prince came to direct the assault in person, and so mightily encouraged the English by his voice and example, that they redoubled their exertions. Still the resistance was obstinate; and there were some men of experience who evinced an inclination to give up an enterprise likely to cost more time than the prize was worth, when an event occurred which led to a total change in the mode of attack, and brought matters to a conclusion.

I have mentioned, in the chapter telling of my arrival at Bordeaux, that one of the squires who attended the Prince of Wales at the monastery of St. Andrew, in that city, was named Bernard; and this squire, owing to the services he had rendered, was held in high esteem by

his master. Now it happened that, when the castle of Romarantin was being assaulted, Bernard, while standing near the ditch by the prince's side, was struck by a stone thrown from the castle, and fell dead on the spot.

"By good St. George!" exclaimed the prince, "I swear not to be trifled with in this wise. I will not move hence until I have the castle and all in my possession."

Some of the wise and prudent shook their heads; but at this moment I, Arthur Winram, who had at the time dismounted near the spot, stepped forward.

"My lord," said I, addressing the prince, "it seems to me that this is an occasion on which we might for ever use lances and arrows in vain; and I put it to your highness if it would not be well to order bombards to be brought forward, and aquereaux and Greek fire to be shot from them."

"Right," replied the prince, after a moment's reflection; "let it be done"; and forthwith, to the consternation of the garrison, the bombards made their appearance.

The experiment was even more successful than I had anticipated. Rapidly the bombards did their work. Very soon the lower court of the castle was in a blaze; and the fire, reaching a large tower that was covered with thatch, gave indications not to be mistaken that it would speedily envelope the whole castle. Amazed and terrified, the garrison uttered cries of consternation, and the Lord of Boucicault and the Hermit of Chaumont, perceiving that they must either surrender or perish in the flames, no longer hesitated. Coming down, they yielded themselves to the prince, who, while allowing the other knights and squires in the castle to go at liberty, made the lord and the hermit ride with him and attend him as his prisoners, and, leaving Romarantin, marched forward as before, ravaging the country, in the direction of Anjou, and Touraine, and Poitou.

But, ere the prince could reach Poitiers, the danger which had for some time been threatening his little army of invaders was drawing near; and rumour brought vague intelligence that John of Valois was at hand.

CHAPTER LIV

THE COMING FOE

WHILE the Prince of Wales was, with what speed he could, retreating from the scene of his exploits, in the hope of reaching Bordeaux, John of Valois, bent on intercepting the young hero's march, and vowing to destroy his army, was following his track with less instinctive sagacity, indeed, but with as thorough a tenacity of purpose, as the bloodhound by which we had been chased after our escape from the castle of Mount Moreville on that memorable night in early May. Never, in truth, had that fiery warrior shown more eagerness and determination than in hastening to the conflict which was to decide his fate.

From the hour in which he received intelligence of the prince's incursion, John was all excitement and activity. No sooner did he learn that the heir of England was marching towards Berry, and carrying all before him, than he mustered all his energies to meet the crisis, and to strike a sure and shattering blow at the pride and honour of the nation by whose king the race which he represented had been humbled to the dust. After issuing a special summons to all nobles and knights who held fiefs under him to assemble, without fail, on the borders of Touraine and Blois, and not, on any pretext whatever, to absent themselves, on pain of incurring his highest displeasure, he gave orders for securing the towns and bridges on the Loire, so as to prevent the English passing that river. In order to hasten the preparations for his enterprise, he left Paris with a large body of men whom he then had under arms; and, taking up his quarters within the walls of Chartres, while his army encamped in the fields outside the town, he awaited the arrival of his adherents, and meanwhile applied himself diligently to the task of obtaining accurate information as to the movements of the enemies whom he was dooming to destruction. And soon to the royal standard of France came princes and chiefs of great name, and captains of high renown,

conspicuous among whom were the Duke of Athens, Constable of France; the Lords de Nesle and D'Andreghen, Marshals of France; the Dukes of Orleans and of Bourbon; the Counts of Tancarville, and Dammartin, and Vantadour, and Ponthieu; and last, but not least, Lord Robert de Duras, Bertrand du Guesclin, the famous Breton warrior; John de Saintré, esteemed the most accomplished of French knights; and Geoffrey de Chargny, celebrated for having, albeit in vain, attempted to recover Calais; and Eustace de Ribeaumont, who, at Calais, had fought hand to hand with King Edward, and who still wore the chaplet of pearls which, on that occasion, he had so valorously won from his victor. All these, and hundreds more already bearing names terrible in war, gathered round John of Valois at Chartres; and by his side were his four young sons—Charles, Duke of Normandy; Louis, Duke of Anjou; John, Duke of Berry; and Philip, Duke of Burgundy—eager for battle, and not doubtful of victory. What wonder that, so surrounded, and with sixty thousand men ready to obey his word of command, the royal warrior, as he listened to accounts of his youthful adversary's exploits, became more and more impatient for the hour of carnage and revenge?

And it was not merely by the nobles and knights of France that John of Valois was encompassed as he indulged in anticipations of triumph over the prince who had led the van of the army that quelled the haughty insolence of his sire. Around him were warriors from another land, whose kings had long been in alliance with his ancestors, and whose barons looked to him for protection, and regarded him with reverence. At that time the enthusiasm for crusades, once general in Christendom, had reached Scotland; and a band of Scots, headed by Lord Douglas, Sir Archibald Douglas, son of "the good Sir James," and Sir William Ramsay, a knight of great fame, had taken the Cross, and left their country to combat the Saracen. On reaching the Continent, however, they learned that John was about to march against the English; and, finding the sound of the trumpet of war irresistible, they forgot their religious vows, and offered their swords to aid in emancipating France from her English conquerors.

Warm was the reception with which they met ; high was the distinction with which they were treated ; and under the standard of France they now rode to the war, rejoicing in the opportunity of dealing, on French soil, a blow to their enemies of England.

At length the time drew nigh for bringing the enterprise to a conclusion ; and John of Valois, having learned that the English were in Touraine, and intent on making their way through Poitou to reach Gascony, left Chartres, and, marching to Chauvigny, six leagues from Poitiers, on Thursday, the 15th of September, took up his residence in the town, while his army encamped in the meadows that border the river Vienne.

And now, nothing likely to contribute to the success of his enterprise having been omitted, John no longer tarried from the encounter, for which he longed not the less eagerly that the chances were all on his side. On the morning of Friday, while his marshals performed their office and kept order in the ranks, he passed the bridge of Chauvigny with forty thousand horse, while the rear of his army passed by the bridge of Châtelleraunt ; and all, as they reached the opposite side of the river, took the road to Poitiers, and delighted their souls with visions of the Prince of Wales carried in chains to Paris and adding to the triumph of the conqueror on his return to the capital.

It happened, however, that a small body of Frenchmen did not leave Chauvigny that day. So great, indeed, was the crowd, that the Count of Joigny and three other barons found it impossible to pass the bridge with the main army, and, submitting to the delay with what patience they could, returned to their quarters, and remained during Friday night in the town. Betimes next morning, however, they mounted and followed in the track of the army, which was three leagues in advance, and, in order to reach Poitiers, made for the open fields and heaths surrounded by woods, and pursued their way, fearing no interruption. But Poitiers they were not destined to reach. While in the open fields and heaths they met with an adventure which to some of them resulted in death, to others in captivity ; and this adventure

led to another, the rumour of which arrested the progress of John of Valois when about to enter Poitiers, and induced him to turn back to the plains of Beauvoir, where Fate, while flattering his pride, heating his blood, stimulating his ardour, raising his hopes, and tempting him to rashness, busily prepared the events which reduced him to despair and conducted him to captivity.

CHAPTER LV

AN UNWELCOME DISCOVERY

It was the morning of Saturday, the 17th of September, 1356, and the Prince of Wales, having rested for the night at a village near Poitiers, mounted at nine in the morning to continue his march towards Bordeaux. Nor, though John of Valois was at that time so near, had the English any such intelligence of his approach as could be relied on. In fact, the French were so exasperated with the incursion that they would give nothing like exact information, and the scouts on whom the prince depended could give nothing but the most vague notion of the movements of the enemy. All was surmise and uncertainty. One thing only was a matter of notoriety—nobody pretended to doubt that John was in arms, and at the head of a mighty host. Still the English were undismayed; and still their dauntless young leader hoped to make good his retreat, and to save them from the peril of an encounter of which the chances were deemed altogether desperate.

In the various endeavours made, at that crisis, to obtain tidings of the foe, I had not been idle; but my efforts, like those of my neighbours, had resulted in failure, and I had lost all hope of being of service in the matter, when I was startled by the arrival of Roger Redhand, who, equipped by John Copeland for the war, made his way to the prince's army through countless dangers, and brought intelligence of such moment that I immediately repaired to the prince's tent to communicate it without loss of time. The prince, at the moment, had his hand on the mane of his black steed, and was about to mount;

but on seeing me approach he paused and turned round with an inquiring look.

"My lord," said I gravely, "I bring news."

"Good or bad?" asked the prince, affecting to appear gay, though he was strongly impressed with the responsibility of his position.

"Good or bad as you take it, my lord," replied I; "but, for my part, I regard it in such a light that I would to God it were other than it is."

"Nevertheless," exclaimed the prince, "speak out frankly. Of late I have felt that there was danger in every breath of wind, and would rather know the full extent of it at once, that I may consider in what manner it may best be coped with."

"In truth, then, my lord," said I, "John, Count of Valois, who calls himself King of France, yesterday passed the bridge of Chauvigny with his four sons, twenty-five dukes and earls, upwards of six score of banners, and more than sixty thousand men; and he is now approaching Poitiers with the certainty of intercepting your march, and with the determination of making you fight or yield."

"God help us!" exclaimed the prince, "for we are, indeed, in extreme peril. But it must be boldly met, and we must consider what is best to be done under the circumstances."

Far too prudent to neglect any precautions likely to conduce to the safety of his army, the prince now summoned the Captal of Buch and Sir Eustace d'Ambreticourt, and ordered those brave warriors, with sixty men, well armed and mounted, to make observations and seek adventures; and I attended the Captal in the expedition. After riding through a wood by a rutty road, we, by accident, reached the heath which the Count of Joigny and his comrades were traversing, and found ourselves in the presence of a formidable body of enemies. Nor did they, as might have been expected, for a moment mistake us for friends. Putting on their helmets, and unfurling their banners, they fixed their lances in rest, and struck spurs to their horses.

"Now," said I, regarding the chances of an encounter as wholly desperate, "there is but one way of turning this

adventure to some account, and that is, by flying and alluring them to follow us till we reach the prince."

"By the head of St. Anthony, it is well thought of!" exclaimed the Captal.

And wheeling our horses, we made for the rutty road, and dashed through the wood, while the French, shouting loudly and making a great noise, pursued with all the speed they could. But their clamour suddenly ceased when, opening our ranks, we allowed them to pass through, and they discovered how they had been deluded. It was too late, however, to think of retreat. Indeed, some of them, in their ardour, had advanced so far that they were right upon the banner of the prince ere they became aware of the stratagem. A sharp conflict ensued, and the French fought well; but many of them were slain; and the Count of Joigny, after being made prisoner, confirmed the tidings that John of Valois was at hand, and bent on giving battle.

All doubt as to the presence of the French being now dispelled, the Prince of Wales took such measures as the emergency seemed to demand. Collecting all stragglers, and issuing orders that no one should, on any pretext, advance or skirmish before the battalions of the marshals, he despatched the Captal of Buch and Sir Walter Woodland, with a select band of two hundred horsemen, of whom I was one, to observe where the French were encamped; and, pricking forward, we soon came in sight of the seemingly countless multitude that covered the plains while moving towards the city. But, numerous as they were, the Captal of Buch was in no mood to retire without giving them a taste of his steel.

"By the head of St. Anthony, gentlemen!" said he, "it would be a shame to return to the prince without performing something against the enemy."

"May I never again be embraced by my mistress," said Sir Walter Woodland, "if I do return without having unhorsed, at least, one foe!"

"By good St. George, knights and gentlemen!" said I, the thought of what Copeland would have done in such a case rushing through my mind, "it is mere waste of time to hesitate. Upon them!"

And, without further delay, we charged forward on the rear of the French with such effect that many were unhorsed ; some were taken prisoners ; and so much impression was made that their main army began to be in motion ere we retreated ; and John of Valois, having news of the skirmish as he was on the point of entering the gates of Poitiers, reined up, turned back with his whole force, and made for the open fields, with vows of vengeance on his lips.

Meanwhile, returning to the prince, the Captal of Buch informed him as to the appearance presented by the French, and their probable numbers.

“God be our aid,” said the prince calmly. “For ourselves we can only do one thing to save ourselves—and that is, to fight them in the most advantageous manner.”

CHAPTER LVI

POICTIERS

ON the rounded extremity of a chain of hills, surrounded on all sides by narrow ravines, through which flow the waters of the river Clain, an affluent of the Vienne, stands the capital of Poitou, a province which came with Eleanor, heiress of Guienne, to Henry Plantagenet, the first of his race who reigned in England, and which escaped from the grasp of their luckless son, King John, in his struggle with Philip Augustus.

A fair city Poitiers is, and remarkable for its widely-extending walls. In truth, it might claim to be one of the largest cities in France, if judged merely by the space which the walls inclose. But its steep and winding streets and large squares cover only a small portion of the ground included, much of which consists of fields and gardens : and neither the population nor the wealth of the place is, by any means, such as a stranger would naturally suppose when viewing it from the outside. But Poitiers had something to boast of in the shape of historical memorials. While the cathedral, built by Henry Plantagenet, reminds men of the days when a King of England ruled from the

Orkneys to the Pyrenees, there are remnants of a civilisation that existed before the name of Plantagenet or of England was known. Here an arch, there an aqueduct, at another place the relics of an amphitheatre, recall to memory the age when Rome was great, and when evidences of Roman grandeur and dominion were everywhere visible.

Nor is Poitiers wanting in historical associations which recall the days of Frankish conquest and prowess in war; for, in the sixth and eighth centuries, its neighbourhood witnessed two famous fights. Near Poitiers, in the year 507, Clovis won a great victory over the Visigoths; and near Poitiers, in 758, Charles Martel won a great victory over the Saracens. It was now to be the scene of a battle in which the French were to sustain a more signal defeat than ever they inflicted, and in which the heir of Clovis and Charles Martel and his chivalry were to have still worse fortune than befell Charlemagne and his paladins at the pass of Roncesvalles.

But as yet no such disaster was dreamt of even by the least sanguine; and, in spite of the lesson they had been taught, the cry of the French, as before Cressy, was "Kill—kill—kill." There was little apprehension of defeat in the streets and squares of Poitiers; almost as little, perhaps, in the ranks of that mighty army which was slowly encamping in the dusk of evening under the banner of France on the plains outside the excited city. The old lion had turned to bay at Cressy, and torn his hunters to pieces. And the young lion should pay dearly for his father's victory.

But within the walls of Poitiers there was, at least, one person, who, albeit regarding the situation of the English as desperate, believed that a battle ought to, and might be prevented. Some time before the Prince of Wales took Romorantin, the Pope sent Cardinal Perigord into France to endeavour to make peace between John of Valois and the enemies whom his vindictive violence had raised up, especially the King of Navarre, who was still detained in prison at Paris. But the mission came to nothing. After several interviews, the cardinal, finding

that all his pacific counsels were rejected, returned to Tours, and was there when he learned that John and the Prince of Wales were both advancing towards Poitiers, and that a meeting seemed inevitable. On hearing this, the cardinal, true to his character of peacemaker, hastened to Poitiers; and now, as the two armies took up their quarters for the night, with every prospect of a battle on the morrow, he resolved, ere they could come to blows, to make a great effort, by offering his mediation, to prevent the effusion of Christian blood.

And while the cardinal meditated the night closed over the city and over the plain.

CHAPTER LVII

SUNDAY MORNING

AFTER discovering that John of Valois was between him and Gascony, and halting at Mapertuis, the Prince of Wales, with a determination to make the best of circumstances, took up a strong position, and posted his men in a vineyard, which could only be approached by a lane bounded by hedges, and so narrow that scarcely four horsemen, even if unopposed, could make their way along it abreast. To this lane the prince directed his particular attention, fortifying the hedges on either side, and lining them with archers, who were placed under the orders of Liulph of Windsor, and whose bearded arrows were likely to do terrible execution on such of the enemy as were venturesome enough to be the earliest assailants. At the same time he barricaded his camp with the bombards and waggons, posted his men-at-arms with great skill among vines and thorns, just where the narrow lane terminated in the vineyard, and having drawn up in front of them a body of archers, who were formed in the shape of a portcullis, or harrow, he caused many mounds and ditches to be made round the place, in order to protect them from assailants; and, thus intrenched, he awaited the coming of the foe with a calmness worthy at once of the heir of

the Plantagenets, and, in spite of his youth, beyond all comparison the foremost war-chief in Christendom—his own great father not excepted.

Such as I have described it was the position of the English when Sunday morning dawned—that day when, according to French calculations, the English were either to yield to mercy or to rush upon their destruction. As yet, however, there was a chance of accommodation. At all events, the peace-maker was at hand.

But meanwhile John of Valois was arraying his men. No sooner, indeed, did the sun rise than he was in motion, with the determination of bringing the matter to a decisive issue. In fact, believing that the English were absolutely at his mercy, the royal warrior was all impatience to crown his enterprise with a great victory. Rising early, he caused a solemn mass to be sung in his pavilion; and having, with his four sons, taken the sacrament, he summoned his nobles and knights, and held a council of war. After much deliberation, it was resolved that each lord should display his banner in the name of God and St. Denis, and that the whole army should advance.

And now the marshals caused trumpets to be sounded, and all the men-at-arms mounted their horses, and made for that part of the plain where the standard of France fluttered in the breeze; and never, assuredly, even in this age, so remarkable for chivalrous displays, had there been seen so grand a display as was made by the flower of the French nobles on that occasion, as, arrayed in brilliant armour, and mounted on magnificent steeds, with banners and pennons flying, they set their men in battle order. By the advice of the Constable of France and the marshals, the French army was divided into three brigades. Of these, the first was commanded by the two marshals; the second by the Duke of Normandy, John's eldest son, with whom was the Constable of France; the third by John in person. And on that day, when the princes and the nobles of France looked so gay and brilliant, grander and more magnificent than all—although nineteen others were armed like himself, in order to distract the attention of the English archers—was John of Valois. Arrayed in

splendid armour, glittering with gold, and bestriding a white steed—the symbol of sovereignty—the royal chief was the observed of all observers as he rode along the ranks, accompanied by Geoffrey de Chagny, to whom, as the bravest and most prudent knight of his country, had been entrusted the duty of bearing the royal standard of France.

At this moment, when fully anticipating an immediate and easy victory over the few thousand Englishmen, who had scarcely wherewithal to make a meal, John was suddenly seized with a desire to know what his enemies were doing, and, with the object of gratifying his curiosity, summoned Sir Eustace de Ribeaumont and two other knights.

“Sir Eustace,” said he, “ride forward as near these English as you can, and examine their countenance, taking notice of their numbers, and observing which will be the most advantageous way for us to combat them, whether on horseback or on foot.”

Sir Eustace de Ribeaumont and his comrades bowed their heads and departed ; and there was a pause till they returned.

“Well,” asked John of Valois eagerly, “what news bring you ?”

“Sire,” said Sir Eustace de Ribeaumont, speaking for the others, “we have accurately examined the numbers and appearance of the English, and they may amount, according to our estimate, to about two thousand men-at-arms, four thousand archers, and fifteen hundred footmen. We do not imagine that they can make more than one battalion. Nevertheless,” added Sir Eustace gravely, “they are formidable ; for they occupy a very strong position ; and they are posted with such judgment that they will not be easily attacked.”

“And in what manner would you advise me to attack them ?” asked John.

“On foot, sire,” replied Sir Eustace. “Except three hundred of the boldest and most expert men of your army, who must be well armed and excellently mounted, in order, if possible, to break the body of archers ; and, when the archers are broken, then your battalions must

advance quickly on foot, attack the English men-at-arms hand to hand, and combat them valiantly. This is the best advice that I can give you."

"Thus shall it be, then," said John; and, riding with his marshals from battalion to battalion, he selected, in conformity with their opinions, three hundred knights and squires of the greatest repute in his army, each well armed, and mounted on the best of horses; and, at the same time, formed the battalion of Germans, who, under the Counts of Saltzburg and Nassau, were to remain on horseback and assist the marshals. These arrangements made, and the rest of the men-at-arms having dismounted, John, agreeably to the custom of the age, spurred his white charger to the head of his army, and, raising his hand for silence, harangued his adherents.

"Men of Paris, Chartres, Rouen, and Orleans," said John, with his head uncovered and his eyes glancing fire, "you have been in the habit of threatening loudly what you would do to the English if you could find them, and you have expressed a strong wish to meet them in arms. Now, at length, your wish shall be gratified. I am about to lead you towards them, and let me see how bravely you will revenge yourselves for all the mischief and damage they have done you. Be assured we will not part without fighting."

"Sire," shouted the French, "with God's aid we will most cheerfully meet them, and avenge all the injuries they have done us."

"And now," said John, "let every man who is on foot take off his spurs; and let those who are armed with lances shorten them to the length of five feet, so as to be more manageable; and then let us upon our foes in the name of God and St. Denis!"

Promptly the commands of John of Valois were obeyed. Every man took off his spurs; every man shortened his lance; and the French were on the point of marching towards the vineyard in which the Prince of Wales was posted, when suddenly, with a splendid train, up to the spot galloped the Cardinal Perigord, who, making a low reverence, intreated John, with uplifted hands and for the love of God, to pause for a moment and hearken.

“Most dear sire,” said the cardinal earnestly, “you have here with you all the flower of knighthood of your kingdom against a mere handful of people, as the English are, compared to your army. You may have them on other terms than a battle; and it will be more honourable and profitable to you to gain them by pacific means than to risk such a fine army and such noble persons as you have with you. In all humility, therefore, I beseech you, by the love of God, that you will permit me to go to the Prince of Wales, and remonstrate with him on the dangerous situation in which he has placed himself.”

“By St. Denis!” replied the king, “it is very agreeable to me; but make haste back.”

“Sire,” said the cardinal, “you have no occasion to be so impatient to fight the English. They cannot escape you. I therefore intreat you to grant them a truce from this time till to-morrow’s sunrise.”

“No,” said John, shaking his head.

“No, no!” shouted hundreds of French warriors, with violent gesticulations.

But the cardinal spoke so eloquently, and appealed so strongly to the generosity of the French to spare enemies who were so obviously at their mercy, that at length John of Valois and his council consented to grant a truce for the day; and, while the cardinal rode off hastily to confer with the prince, John ordered his pavilion of red silk to be pitched, and, dismounting from his white charger, dismissed his army to their quarters, and entered the pavilion to confer with his marshals and to await the result of the cardinal’s mediation.

CHAPTER LVIII

THE PEACE-MAKER

ON foot, in the midst of his army, in the thickest part of the vineyard, where he had posted his men, as I have already stated, stood the Prince of Wales, calm and serene in the midst of danger. Never, perhaps, in the whole course of his eventful life, was the young hero

more calm and serene than when it was announced to him that the Cardinal of Perigord was dismounting and about to come into his presence. And when, without delay, the cardinal approached, he was evidently greatly impressed; and, making a low reverence, which the prince returned with much affability, he indicated his errand, and forthwith entered upon the business of mediation.

"Fair son," said the cardinal, "if you have well considered the great army of the King of France you will permit me to make up matters between you, if I possibly can."

"Sir," replied the prince, "my own honour and that of my army saved, I am ready to listen to any reasonable terms."

"Fair son," said the cardinal, who seemed to rejoice at the prince's words, "you speak well, and if I can I will bring about a treaty; for it would be a great pity that so many worthy persons as are here should meet in battle when the quarrel might be peacefully settled."

Finding that the Prince of Wales was well inclined to listen to proposals of peace, and to give them a rational consideration, the cardinal returned to John of Valois; and all Sunday he rode from one army to the other, and exerted his art and eloquence to effect a reconciliation. Many proposals were discussed. Much to his disappointment, however, he made no progress. Indeed, John's demands were such that the prince could not have consented to them without sacrificing his own pride and the dignity of his country; and as the day wore away it became evident that the negotiation would arrive at no satisfactory conclusion.

"I can listen to no other terms," said John, violently, "than that four of the chief persons of the English army should be given up to my will, and that the Prince of Wales and all his army should surrender themselves unconditionally."

"Sir," said the prince to the cardinal, when this proposal was repeated to him, "you know full well that it is impossible for me to agree to such terms. But I offer to surrender all the towns I have taken in France during my

expedition, to give up without ransom all my prisoners, and to swear not to bear arms against France for the space of seven years."

"No," exclaimed John, after holding conference with his council; "this offer is not satisfactory. But if the Prince of Wales and a hundred of his knights will surrender themselves as my prisoners, I promise to allow the English to pass on without a battle."

"No," replied the prince with much disdain; "I can do nothing to the prejudice of my honour, for which I am accountable to my father and to my country; and as for surrendering myself a prisoner, in that case I should have to be ransomed; and I swear, by good St. George, that none but liars shall ever have it in their power to tell that England had to pay a ransom for me."

It now appeared that the cardinal was not destined to accomplish the work which he so earnestly desired. But so completely was his heart set on peace that he once more returned to the French army, still hoping by his exhortations to pacify the leaders of the embattled hosts. His reception, however, was this time the reverse of complimentary.

"Return to Poitiers," cried John of Valois and his council, "and attempt not to bring us any more of your treaties or pacifications, or it may fare the worse with you."

"Fair son," said the cardinal, coming to the Prince of Wales to inform him of the result of his negotiations, "I have done all that a man could do to bring about peace. But I cannot pacify the King of France. There must be a battle: so exert yourself as much as possible."

"Such are my intentions, and such the intentions of my army," replied the prince, "and may God defend the right!"

The cardinal now took leave, and rode away towards Poitiers. In his train, however, there were some knights and men-at-arms who were much more inclined to the French than to the English. Aware that a battle was imminent, they selected as their leader the Castellan of Amposta, who was then attached to the cardinal, and, between the camps and the city, stole quietly away to join the French.

On hearing of this the Prince of Wales was highly enraged. Not unnaturally blaming the cardinal, who had so strongly expressed his neutrality, the prince, in his anger, concluded that he had been deceived, and did not fail to express himself strongly on the subject.

“By my faith,” said he angrily, “it seems that, notwithstanding his fine words, this priest has been exercising all his cunning to deceive me. But let him beware; for, by my father’s soul, ere the sun sets to-morrow I may send him such a token as will convince him that I am not one to be fooled with impunity.”

“My lord,” said those in whose presence this threat was uttered, “restrain your wrath; for we cannot tell whether or no the cardinal was aware of the desertion of his company till he arrived at Poitiers.”

CHAPTER LIX

CHANDOS AND CLERMONT

WHILE the Cardinal of Perigord was riding from one camp to another, vainly endeavouring to make peace, the knights on neither side were wholly idle. Many, both from the French and English ranks, availed themselves of the truce which had been agreed to, and rode forth, skirting their enemy’s army, and examining the dispositions.

Sir John Chandos was one of the English knights who mounted and left the army of the Prince of Wales to inspect the host of John of Valois; and it was my fortune to accompany that famous warrior. Now it chanced that, while Sir John Chandos rode near one of the wings of the French army, John, Lord of Clermont, one of the French marshals, was out on horseback viewing the English; and both of them had the same device on their surcoats—namely, a blue Madonna worked in embroidery, surrounded by sunbeams. Meeting as they were returning to their quarters, both stood still, and each gazed on the other in some surprise. For a time there was silence; but at length the Lord of Clermont recovered sufficiently

from his surprise to speak, and to speak much more boldly and loudly than I thought consistent with chivalrous dignity, under the circumstances.

“Chandos!” shouted the French marshal, dismounting, and looking fierce and menacing, “how long is it since you have taken upon you to wear my arms?”

“In truth,” replied Sir John, also dismounting, not without contempt in his tone, “I might as lief ask that of you; for it is as much mine as yours.”

“I deny that,” cried Clermont angrily; “and were it not for the truce between us, I would soon show you that you have no right to wear it.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Chandos, making a great effort to keep his temper, “you will find me to-morrow on the field, ready prepared to defend, and to prove by force of arms, that it is as much mine as yours.”

“By our Lady!” said Clermont, preparing to mount, “such are the boastings of you English, who can invent nothing new, but take for your own whatever you see handsome belonging to others.”

“On my faith!” exclaimed Chandos, whose temper was giving way, “these are biting taunts; but I answer such language, not with words, but blows!” and, as he spoke, both parties moved on to their respective camps.

Now I had listened to the whole colloquy with something like amazement, that two men so eminent should indulge in such high words on such a subject. I, who was supposed to have no arms, daily saw the arms which I believed myself entitled to bear carried by another; and I, who had no name, save that which I had won while wrestling for the ram on the green at Windsor, daily heard the name which I felt certain was mine by right applied to a person whom I had every reason to dislike and distrust. It was impossible, under such circumstances, to sympathise very strongly with Sir John Chandos in the indignation he felt at another man questioning his right to bear a blue Madonna; but I appreciated his great qualities, and, feeling sincerely shocked at the Lord of Clermont’s manner, I had no hesitation in expressing myself strongly.

“Beshrew me,” exclaimed I with indignation, “if I

could imagine aught more insolent than that French knight's challenge."

"In truth," replied Sir John, "it recalls to my mind a story I have heard of Garci Perez de Vargas, one of the stoutest knights who aided Ferdinand of Castile in the conquest of Seville. But you also may have heard it?"

"Never," said I.

"Well," continued Sir John, "it appears that Garci Perez had a dispute with another knight, who, bearing the same arms as Garci, thought fit to assert that he had no right to wear them. A sally being made by the Moors, the complainant, with others, made his escape; but Garci stood firm to his post, and did not return to the camp till the Moors were driven back into the city. When he did return, he came to the place where his rival was, and, holding up his shield, all bruised and battered, pointed to the spot where the bearing was effaced, saying, 'Sir, it must now be confessed that you show more respect than I do for this coat of arms; for you keep yours bright and unsullied, while mine is sadly discoloured.' The knight," added Sir John, "was so sorely ashamed, that henceforth Garci Perez bore his achievements without gainsaying or dispute."

"On my faith!" exclaimed I admiringly, "this Garci Perez had a most noble way of taking his revenge." And, thus conversing, we made our way, just as the sun was setting, back to the English camp, where the prince, no longer hoping to avoid a battle, was maturing the plans he had previously formed for fighting to the best advantage.

It was while we reached Mapertuis that the Cardinal of Perigord, having utterly failed with his pacific counsels, was riding towards Poitiers, and that the Castellan of Amposta and the knights and men-at-arms were stealing away to join the French army.

CHAPTER LX

THE ARRAY OF THE ENGLISH

THE night of Sunday passed without any incident worthy of record; and cold and clear dawned the morning of Monday, the 19th of September, 1356—a day likely to be long remembered by one nation with pride, by the other with mortification.

From the moment that the Cardinal of Perigord took his departure, without being able to bring John of Valois to any reasonable terms, the Prince of Wales perceived that an engagement was inevitable, and lost no time in regrets for what could not be remedied. Nor was it the prince's interest to encourage further delay; for, as regarded provisions, the hostile armies were very differently situated. The French, who had plenty, were living at their ease; the English, who had hardly any, and who had not the means of procuring either food or forage, were in danger of perishing from want, or of being starved into submission. Nothing but a battle and a victory could relieve the English from their perplexities; and to fight a battle and obtain a victory the prince bent all his energy and all his intelligence.

I have stated that, on halting at Mapertuis, the Prince of Wales posted himself in a vineyard that could only be entered by a narrow lane; and that, having fortified the weak places with his bombards and baggage-waggons, and lined the hedges of the narrow lane with archers to harass the approaching foe, he skilfully posted his men-at-arms in the vineyard among vines and thorns, and in front of them placed a body of archers, drawn up in the form of a portcullis, or harrow, and dug ditches and threw up mounds to defend the archers against the attack of cavalry. On Monday morning the prince did not see reason to make any alterations in his order of battle; but he ordered some knights of skill and valour to remain on horseback, and with six hundred archers on horseback post themselves on a little hill to the right, and, by passing

over the summit, to get round that wing of the French which, under the Duke of Normandy, was posted at the base of the hill. Having seen that his order was obeyed, the prince returned to the middle of the vineyard, and there remained on foot with the knights and men-at-arms, all of them being completely armed, with their horses near, to be mounted in case of need.

And now, having given his standard to be borne in the battle by Sir Walter Woodland, the Prince of Wales, attended by James, Lord Audley, and Sir John Chandos, with his black armour braced on, save the helmet, which was carried by Simon Burley, his favourite squire, stood forth, and, raising his hand to command attention—agreeably to the custom observed on the previous day by John of Valois—addressed himself to those who shared the dangers of his situation.

“Sirs,” said the prince, elevating his voice to make his words heard as far as possible, “it seems evident to me, after all that has passed within the last twenty-four hours, that this man, who calls himself King of France, and usurps my father’s rights and dignity, holds me and my army in great contempt. Nor, considering how small a body we are compared to our enemies, should I marvel at their confidence if I did not remember how a host of men were overthrown by a handful on that day when Philip of Valois came to give battle to my lord and father on the plains of Cressy. Wherefore, sirs, what though we be a small body of men compared to our foes? Do not let us be cast down on that account; for the battle is not always to the strong, nor does victory always follow numbers; but where the Almighty pleases to bestow it, there does it fall. If, through good fortune, the day be ours, we shall gain the greatest honour and glory in this world; and if the contrary should happen, and we fall, I have a father and brothers, and you also have friends and kinsmen, by whom our fall will surely be avenged. For my part, I have already said, and I now repeat, that I will not fall into the hands of our enemies alive, and that England shall never have to pay a ransom for me. Therefore, sirs, I entreat all of you to do your devoirs bravely, like freemen and Englishmen; and, come what

may, you shall see me this day prove myself a good and hardy knight, so help me God and good St. George!"

Almost as the prince concluded, and reverentially kissed the cross on his sword, the trumpets of the French marshals sounded, and the army of John of Valois, which had been for some time forming in the plain of Beauvoir, began to advance; and, ere the loud cheer caused by the prince's spirited harangue died away, the marshals, at the head of their men-at-arms, were spurring forward, with the object of penetrating through the narrow lane into the vineyard.

At that moment Lord Audley turned to the prince.

"Sir," said he, "I have ever most loyally served my lord your father and yourself, and shall, so long as I have life, continue to do so. But I must now acquaint you that formerly I made a vow, if ever I should be in battle with your father or any of his sons, that I would be foremost in the attack, and either prove myself the best combatant on his side or die in the attempt. I therefore beg most earnestly, as a reward for any services I may have rendered, that you will grant me permission honourably to quit you, that I may post myself in such wise as to accomplish my vow."

"Sir James," replied the prince, graciously holding out his hand, "I readily grant your request; and may God ordain that this day you shine in valour above all other knights!"

And Lord Audley, setting off and riding forward with only four squires, whom he had retained to guard his person, placed himself in front of the English to fight with the battalion of the marshals; and Sir Eustace d'Ambreticourt pushed forward to a similar position, hoping also to be the first to engage. But Sir John Chandos remained at the right hand of the prince to aid and advise him, and intimated his determination never during the day, on any account, to leave his post.

And then began the battle of Poitiers.

CHAPTER LXI

ROUT OF THE MARSHALS

It was now nine o'clock on the morning of Monday ; and with trumpets sounding, and armour glancing in the sun, and banners waving in the wind, the French cavalry headed by the marshals came on, laying their lances in rest, and shouting their battle-cries. Their object was to break the archers who were drawn up in the form of a harrow in front of the men-at-arms ; and, being unaware that the hedges were lined with bowmen, they advanced intrepidly into the lane, and prepared to charge. But as they little knew the peril they were incurring, so it speedily appeared that they were quite unprepared to meet any that might unexpectedly occur. No sooner were they fairly in the lane than Liulph of Windsor gave the signal, and forthwith from either hedge started hundreds of archers, with green jackets and white bows, as if they had emerged from the bowels of the earth, and straightway from the white bows barbed arrows flew like showers of hail. The movement was almost magical in its effect. In an instant the marshals were in consternation ; and in another instant this consternation was turned into terror. Riders and horses were equally confounded, amazed, and startled. The men lost their presence of mind, and gazed round in horror ; and their steeds, galled with the pain of their wounds, plunged, snorted, refused to advance, and wheeled round, carrying their riders to and fro.

In vain several knights and squires, with strong wills and strong arms, attempted to force their way forward to the point where the prince was stationed. All their efforts were vain. The confusion was too thorough ; and while the French were still in panic and dismay, into the midst of them rode Lord Audley and Sir Eustace d'Ambreticourt, with their squires, smiting to the ground all who opposed them ; and forward on foot rushed the English men-at-arms, doing terrible execution, and capturing and

slaying knights and squires at their pleasure. Resistance was useless under the circumstances. Men and horses sank to rise no more. Nor did the French marshals fare better than their comrades. While shrieks of dismay and pain rent the air, and intimated to the great army of France the fate that had befallen their van, the Lord d'Andreghen, after being roughly handled, was taken prisoner; and the Lord Clermont, after bravely fighting under his banner as long as he was able, was ultimately struck down and killed on the spot.

"Now, thanks to God and St. George," exclaimed the prince, joyfully, "the day promises to be ours; and ours it shall be, if courage can make up for want of numbers. But let us not delay in pursuing the advantage we have gained. Mount and ride," said he, turning round, "and lose not a moment in ordering the men-at-arms and archers on the hill to attack the second battalion of the enemy. Haste, haste! ride as if for your life."

Without a word I, Arthur Winram, sprang on my steed, and spurring through thorns and vines, and over hedge and dyke, carried the prince's order to the knights; and almost ere I had time to return the movement was executed. Descending the hill and making a circuit, the men-at-arms and mounted archers suddenly showed themselves on the flank and rear of that division of the French commanded by the Duke of Normandy, and the effect was such as can hardly be described. Aware that their first battalion was routed, the French knights and men-at-arms hastened to mount their horses, and panic seized the whole division. With vivid recollections of Cressy passing through their minds, the nobles around the Duke of Normandy detached eight hundred lances to escort the heir of France and his brother from the field; and their departure was taken as the signal for a general flight.

"All is lost, and it is time for every man to look to his own safety," was the cry; and leaving John of Valois and the third battalion to their fate, knights, and squires, and men-at-arms fled hurriedly and in disorder.

"By my faith," exclaimed I gaily as I watched the flight, "that is a pleasant sight to see. Our English archers never fail their country in the hour of need."

“Nevertheless,” observed Sir John Chandos, who was tiring of inaction, “to me it seems not meet that the archers should have all the peril and all the honour of the day.”

“In truth,” said the prince, musingly, “these archers have been of infinite service; for had they not shot so thickly and so well that our enemies knew not on which side to turn, our position would have been forced. But now methinks it is full time to mount our horses and charge upon our enemies, to complete the work so well begun.”

“Sir,” said Sir John Chandos, “you speak truly: it is time to mount and make for your adversary, who calls himself King of France; for where he is, there will be the main stress of the business. I know well that he has too much valour to fly, and, if it please God and St. George, he must remain with us as our prisoner.”

“Meanwhile,” said the prince, “he must be well fought with; wherefore let us mount with all speed, and advance to the encounter.”

CHAPTER LXII

THE PRINCE IN THE BATTLE

AND now the word of command was passed from rank to rank, and the English men-at-arms who had hitherto remained inactive, hastened to mount their horses. Everything being in readiness, the Prince of Wales, in his black armour, sprang into the saddle, and, attended by his knights and squires, and by Sir John Chandos and Sir Walter Woodland, his standard-bearer, spurred his coal-black steed to the head of the men-at-arms, and receiving his helmet from Simon Burley, placed it on his head, and prepared to charge for victory and honour.

“Now, sir,” said Sir John Chandos, addressing the prince, “already the day is almost ours, and God will put victory in your hands; and you have before said that you will prove yourself a hardy knight.”

“Yes, John,” replied the prince, smiling; “so let us get forward, and I promise that my friends will see more

of my back than mine enemies, for I ever like to be among the foremost." And then turning to Sir Walter Woodland, he added, "Banner, advance in the name of God and St. George."

As the prince spoke the standard-bearer obeyed; and, with trumpets sounding, the young warrior led his men from the vineyard, and dashed into the plain to encounter the foes who, an hour earlier, had regarded him as if he had already been a captive or a corpse.

Issuing from the narrow lane, and charging across the moor to where the French were formed in large bodies, the prince and his riders assailed the division under the Duke of Athens, Constable of France; and, the constable and his knights standing firm, a sharp encounter took place.

"St. George for Guienne!" shouted the English.

"Montjoye, St. Denis!" replied the French.

But the conflict was soon over. The constable, after fighting bravely, fell, and most of his knights were slain around him.

Pursuing their career, the prince and his riders next came in contact with the German cavalry, under the Counts of Saltzburg, Nassau, and Neydo, and the Germans fared as ill as the French had done. The three counts were slain, and the Germans, seeing their leaders fall, took to flight.

Not stopping to make prisoners, the prince, with Chandos by his side, charged on—his friends rallying to his standard, and his enemies flying from his war-cry. What remained of the second division of the French was speedily dispersed; and the Duke of Orleans, who was in command of a body of reserve, fled from the field without an effort to stay the progress of the conqueror.

But, as Chandos had predicted, John of Valois did not fly. Even in the midst of panic and flight, he maintained, as a knight and a soldier, the character which he enjoyed throughout Christendom. Mounted on his white steed, arrayed in royal armour, and accompanied by Philip, his youngest son, John, at the head of his division, faced the English and Gascons under the Earl of Warwick, and fought dauntlessly and well. But his courage

and prowess could not turn the fortune of the field. Around him his men fell in heaps; and when he, after receiving two wounds in the face, was beaten to the ground, the survivors lost hope, and began to escape towards Poitiers.

But still John of Valois was in no mood either to fly or to yield. Rising from the ground, and with his son still by his side, he rallied his broken ranks, and, with his battle-axe in his hand, advanced on foot to renew the conflict, not without the hope of Fortune declaring herself on his side.

By this time the battle had lasted about three hours, and it was nearly noon; and the Prince of Wales, seeing that his enemies were flying in all directions, had halted after one of his charges, and, with a few men-at-arms around him, was calculating the results of the engagement, when suddenly, on foot, with the fury of a lion, and battle-axe in hand, John made his last desperate effort to retrieve the day; and, as the prince turned to renew the conflict, his eye was lighted up with that joy which warriors feel in the prospect of a stern encounter with foemen worthy of their steel. But few around the prince shared his enthusiasm. In fact, it was a most critical moment, and one thrust with a spear, one blow with a battle-axe, might have changed the fate of the day. Fortunately, however, the Earl of Warwick, returning from the pursuit, charged the French in the flank, and they, giving way, fled, in utter confusion and despair, towards Poitiers, the pursuit continuing to the gates of the city.

And now the field was won, and the French were flying and the English pursuing on all hands, when the Prince of Wales suddenly perceived the body of Lord Robert de Duras lying near a bush; and as Lord Robert de Duras was nephew of the Cardinal of Perigord, and as the prince believed that the cardinal had played him false on the previous day, his ire kindled at the sight.

“Place this body on a shield,” said he, addressing two squires, “and see it carried to Poitiers, and present it to the Cardinal of Perigord, and say I salute him by that token.”

“My lord,” remonstrated Sir John Chandos, “do not

think of such things at this moment, when you have to look after others of such importance. Besides, the cardinal may, perhaps, convince you that he is not to blame."

"In truth," said the prince, "I lose all patience when I think of having been so trifled with. But be that as it may, John, it seems that the field is all our own, for I do not see any banners or pennons of the French, nor are there any bodies considerable enough to rally and molest us."

"However," continued Sir John Chandos, "it will be proper for you to halt here and plant your banner on this bush, that it may serve to rally your forces, which seem much scattered. And you may rest yourself a little, as you are much heated."

Accordingly the banner of the Prince of Wales was placed on the bush, and a small pavilion of red silk was pitched hard by, and the prince, taking off his helmet, entered; and the minstrels began to play, and the trumpets and clarions to sound; and the prince ordered liquor to be brought to him and the knights who were present; and they every moment increased in number, for each stopped there with his prisoners in returning from the pursuit; and at length came Lord Cobham and the Earl of Warwick.

"My lords," asked the prince, as they entered the pavilion, "do you know what has become of the King of France?"

"No, sir, not with certainty," replied they. "But we believe he must either be killed or made prisoner, since he never quitted his battalion."

The prince looked grave at this answer; for, naturally enough, he was anxious to hear of the captivity rather than the death of John of Valois, and his countenance expressed the feelings by which he was animated.

"My lords," said he, "I beg you to mount your horses and ride over the field, and bring me such intelligence of him as you can obtain."

"Sir," replied they, "we will most willingly do so;" and, leaving the pavilion, they mounted and went off to ascertain the fate of the vanquished Valois.

CHAPTER LXIII

ADVENTURES IN THE FIELD

I HAVE related how, when the French marshals advanced towards the vineyard at Mapertuis, with the object of forcing the position occupied by the Prince of Wales, Sir Eustace d'Ambreticourt, and James, Lord Audley, being both eager to signalise their prowess in front of the battle, spurred forth to encounter the approaching foe; and I will now relate the adventures which befell them in the field.

It was the ambition of Ambreticourt to be the first to engage the enemy that day; and, while Lord Audley was pushing forward against the marshals, the Hainaulter fixed his shield, laid his lance in rest, and, spurring his steed, galloped towards the battalion of German cavalry. As he did so, Louis von Coucibras, a German knight, observing his approach, dashed out from the ranks of the Count of Nassau, and met him in mid career. The shock was so violent that both of them were unhorsed and rolled to the ground; but Ambreticourt, so far, had the best of the encounter. In fact, the German, who was severely wounded in the shoulder, could not rise; and Sir Eustace, springing nimbly to his feet, hastened towards his prostrate antagonist. But here his fortune for awhile deserted him; for at that moment five German horsemen rode forward, struck the Hainaulter to the ground, seized him as their prisoner, and carried him to the Count of Nassau. Much less attention, however, was paid to Ambreticourt than he considered was his due. Indeed, the Germans very coolly took some pieces of harness, tied him to one of their cars, and left him in that unworthy plight while the conflict was raging before his eyes.

For hours Sir Eustaced'Ambreticourt remained fastened, like a dog, to the car. But at length he was released when the Prince of Wales, from defending his position, became the assailant, and, mounting his black steed, made that splendid charge which bore down all opposition, and scattered the German cavalry as the hawk does pigeons. Ambreticourt was recognised by his own men, rescued,

and remounted. Nor did the brave knight fail to make up for lost time. Many were the gallant deeds he performed ; many were the prisoners he took ; and, when the battle was over, no one could boast more truly of having done his duty.

But it was to Lord Audley that the prize of valour fell ; for meanwhile he was by no means idle. Attended by his four squires, he commenced operations by charging the battalion of the marshals as they advanced into the narrow lane, and, sword in hand, wrought wonders. After fighting for a considerable time with Lord d'Andreghen, whom he handled with more roughness than the French marshal had been accustomed to experience, he precipitated himself into the very thickest of the conflict—not hesitating to encounter any odds. Soon his face and body were severely wounded ; but he still continued to advance, and fought on till he was covered with blood ; and it was not till the close of the battle that he yielded to fatigue and loss of strength, and sheathed his sword. By that time, indeed, he was easily managed ; and his four squires, leading him out of the crowd, conducted him to the side of a hedge, and, lifting him from his horse, placed him gently under a tree that he might recover his breath. Having done this, they took off his armour, examined his wounds, dressed them, and, sewing up the most dangerous, procured a litter to convey him to his tent.

Now, in the hour of victory, the Prince of Wales did not forget Lord Audley, and the vow which that morning he had fared forth to perform. When he was seated in the pavilion of red silk, and had despatched Lord Cobham and the Earl of Warwick to ascertain the fate of John of Valois, he turned to the knights and squires who were around him.

“Does any one know what has become of the Lord James Audley?” asked the prince with much interest.

“Yes, my lord,” replied I ; “I have seen him. He is very badly wounded, and lying in a litter hard by.”

“By my troth,” said the prince, “I grieve to hear he is so sore wounded. But hasten to him, I beg you, and see if he is able to be carried hither ; otherwise I will, without delay, go and visit him.”

I hastened from the pavilion, and found the wounded warrior.

“My lord,” said I, “the prince is most desirous of seeing you.”

“A thousand thanks to the prince for condescending to remember so poor a knight as myself,” replied Lord Audley; and having summoned eight of his servants, he ordered them to carry him in his litter into the prince’s presence.

As the litter was borne into the pavilion the Prince of Wales rose, and tears stood in his blue eyes as he bent over the wounded man and embraced him.

“My Lord James,” said he with emotion, “I am bound to honour you very much, for this day, by your valour, you have acquired glory and renown above us all, and you have proved yourself the most puissant and the bravest of knights.”

“Sir,” replied Lord Audley, “you have a right to say whatever you please, and I wish it were as you have said. But if I have this day been forward to serve you, it has been to accomplish a vow, and it ought not to be so much thought of.”

“My Lord James,” said the prince, “I and all the rest of us deem that you have shown yourself the bravest knight on our side in this battle; and I, to mark my appreciation of your valour, and to furnish you with the means of pursuing your career of renown, retain you henceforth, for ever, as my knight, with five hundred marks of yearly revenue, which I will secure to you upon my estates in England.”

“Sir,” replied Lord Audley, his voice faltering as he spoke, “may God make me deserving of the good fortune you bestow on me!”

By this time Lord Audley found that the interview was becoming more than his remaining strength would enable him to bear; and, after taking leave of the prince, he was carried by his servants from the pavilion. Scarcely had he disappeared when a hurried whisper ran round; and the Prince of Wales, rising with a dignity which no prince in Christendom, not even his own great father, could have rivalled or imitated, turned his face towards the entrance;

and, as he did so, before him stood a warrior, with his crest broken and his armour bruised and stained, leading a boy by the hand.

It was John of Valois, with his youngest son, Philip of Burgundy.

And the prince, making a low obeisance, said—

“All hail the boldest and most determined champion among the chivalry of France!”

CHAPTER LXIV

A ROYAL CAPTIVE

It was noon, and the battle was virtually over; and, albeit the English were already as secure of victory as if every enemy had lain dead on the field, on one spot, hard by a little hillock, a fierce struggle was still maintained. It is true that, after rescuing the Prince of Wales from sudden peril, the Earl of Warwick had driven the French before him with such force that, as I have said, most of them never paused in their flight till they reached the gates of Poitiers. Nevertheless, John of Valois fought on, indulging in vague hopes and forming desperate resolutions. But fate was decidedly against him; and his nobles and knights, bravely as they contended, could do nothing to make their position less desperate than it already was. In attempting to break through the crowd and join their sovereign, the Counts of Tankerville, Ponthieu, and Eu were made prisoners. By the hand of Lord Cobham perished the Count of Dammartin; down, as his sword again descended, fell Geoffrey de Chargny, who had fought gallantly all day, with the standard of France in his hand; and, through the gaps which were thus made in the French army, rushed the English and Gascons in such numbers that they intermingled with their foes, and outnumbered them in the proportion of five to one. It was utterly impossible for John, bold and strong as he was, to hold out longer under such circumstances, and his danger was great. However, the eagerness to take him prisoner was excessive among those who knew him; and, while he was

pulled about from one to another without the least respect for his royal pretensions, some of those who were near shouted loudly—

“Surrender yourself, surrender yourself, or you are a dead man!”

Fortunately for John, there was among the English a young knight of St. Omer, who bore the name of Denis de Morbeque, and who had, five years earlier, been banished from France for killing a man in a fray; and fortunately for himself this knight was at hand. Recognising John, and anxious to save him, Sir Denis, exerting all his strength, pushed rapidly through the crowd.

“Sire, sire,” said he in good French, “surrender yourself; it is your only chance.”

“But to whom shall I surrender myself?” said John, turning round. “Where is my cousin, the Prince of Wales? If I could see him I would speak to him.”

“Sire,” replied Sir Denis, “the prince is not near; but surrender to me, and I will lead you to his presence.”

“Who are you?” asked John with interest.

“Sire,” answered the knight, “I am Denis de Morbeque, a knight of Artois; but I serve the King of England, because I have forfeited all I possessed in France, and no longer consider myself as belonging to the kingdom.”

“Well, sir knight,” said John, giving Sir Denis the glove from his right hand, “I surrender to you. Conduct me to the prince.”

But this proved no easy matter, for several cried, “I have taken him,” and there was much pushing and thronging about the spot; and both John and his young son Philip, who clung resolutely to his father’s side, were unable to free themselves from the numbers who claimed them as prisoners.

In fact, the dispute every moment became louder and fiercer, and ever and anon threatened the most disagreeable consequences; for both English and Gascons were bawling at the top of their voices, and it appeared likely enough that they would ultimately proceed from words to blows.

“He has surrendered to me,” shouted one.

"It is I who have got him," cried a second.

"No, no!" exclaimed others; "we have him."

And as each put in his claim, he attempted to make it good in such a fashion that John found his situation the very reverse of pleasant.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said he, as his patience wore out, "I pray you cease this riot, and conduct me and my son in a courteous manner to the Prince of Wales. You shall all be rewarded. I am so great a lord that I can make you all sufficiently rich."

At these words, which every one heard, the crowd was in some degree appeased; but disputes were again breaking out, and John's position was becoming every moment less agreeable, when suddenly Lord Cobham and the Earl of Warwick, who, while riding over the field, had observed the tumult, spurred up to the place.

"What is the matter?" asked they.

"It is the King of France, who has been made prisoner," was the reply; and immediately more than a dozen knights and squires stepped forward, each claiming the royal captive as his own.

"Gentlemen," said Warwick, bending his brow and raising his voice menacingly, "this behaviour is most unseemly; and, in the name of the Prince of Wales, I command you all to keep your distance, and not to approach unless desired to do so."

And, as the crowd fell back, Warwick and Cobham dismounted, and, advancing to the prisoner, conducted him quietly to the red pavilion in which the prince was resting from the fatigues of the day.

When the two earls escorted their captive and his son into the pavilion, the Prince of Wales was conversing with his knights on the events of the day. On becoming aware of John's presence, however, he rose and made a very low obeisance, as has been related, and, ordering wine and spices to be brought, presented them to the captive with his own hand, and endeavoured to minister what comfort he could.

"In my opinion," said he, "you ought to be glad that this battle, albeit it has not ended as you desired, has redounded so much to your fame; for you have, this

day, had an opportunity of acquiring a high renown for prowess, and have in the field far surpassed all the best knights of whom the chivalry of France can boast."

At these words, John, whose violence seemed to have died out of him, smiled as if in sad reproof; but his young son Philip, who inherited this violence in a high degree, glared on his father's conqueror with the savage ferocity of a young tiger.

CHAPTER LXV

HOW I RESCUED MY WORST ENEMY

AT the time when John of Valois, fighting on foot, with his battle-axe in his hand, rallied his broken ranks, and made that sudden and unexpected attack on the Prince of Wales which, for a moment, threatened to change the fortune of the field, I, Arthur Winram, was separated from the comrades in arms with whom I had charged, and whirled to where the English and French were confused, intermingled, and dealing blows without being well aware whether they were aimed at friends or foes. At this crisis I found myself engaged in hand-to-hand conflict with Sir John de Saintré; and albeit he was esteemed the most accomplished knight in France, I contrived not only to return blow for blow, but to press him so hard that he was not sorry when we were separated by the crowd. Much to my disappointment, I could not take him prisoner, and, falling into other hands, however, he was well treated; but his wounds and bruises ruined his health, and he never recovered from the effects of the combat.

By that time the Earl of Warwick had come to the relief of the prince, and the French, scattered by the charge, were flying in crowds towards Poitiers; but the citizens of Poitiers shut their gates, and would suffer no one to enter; and a fearful struggle took place on the causeway, where the French were so hard pressed that they surrendered without hesitation.

One party, however, who seemed to have no inclination to yield, were contending desperately with an Englishman of rank, whose violent temper had placed him in great

jeopardy. Indeed, he was not only sore beset, but beaten from his horse, and already with one knee on the ground. Nor could there be any mistake as to who he was. I had no doubts on that point. I knew at once, by his splendid armour, by his lion crest, and by the armorial bearings on his surcoat, that he was Roger, Lord De Ov; and, regarding him at that moment simply as an Englishman in peril of dying under the weapons of the enemies of his country, I shouted, "St. George! St. George!" and spurred in to the rescue. As I not only cleared a space around me by the vehemence of my charge, but sent the assailants, with one exception, flying back, my sword descended on a squire of prodigious strength, with such effect that he measured his length on the ground.

"Yield thee, Sir Squire!" said I, leaping from my steed.

"What is your name, and who are you?" asked he somewhat fiercely.

"My name is Arthur Winram, and I am a squire of England," I answered.

"I surrender to you," said the squire: and, as he rose, I recognised Eustace the Strong, whom I had seen at the Castle of Mount Moreville, and who had performed the feat of carrying the ass, with its panniers full of billets, into the hall, and flinging it on the dogs of the hearth.

"In truth, Eustace," said I, after we exchanged greeting, "it is strange that you should be my prisoner, and still stranger that I should have taken you while rescuing my worst enemy."

Meanwhile Lord De Ov had recovered his feet, and as I turned round, he was regarding me with a scowl of hate.

"Varlet!" said he, "deem not that I hold myself in the least measure grateful to you; for I swear by my father's soul that I would rather have died ten deaths than owed life to your interference."

"My lord," replied I, as I prepared to mount my horse and conduct my prisoner to a place of safety, "you owe no gratitude to me for saving your life, for I can easily understand how miserable the life of such as you are must be, with kindred blood shed by your father on your hands, and on your conscience the crime of having robbed

the widow and disinherited the orphan. Come, my lord, you see I am better informed as to the state of your mind than you supposed."

"Dog!" exclaimed he, as furious with rage, he drew his sword, "draw, and let us fight it out! I can no longer brook the sight of you, or tread the same earth, or breathe the same air."

But I folded my arms on my breast, and gazed at him with a calm scorn before which his eye fell and the point of his sword dropped.

"Nevertheless, Lord Roger De Ov," said I, "such penance you must continue to do for the sins of your father and your own until it is my good pleasure to relieve you. The time is not yet come; but it will some day; and then may God have mercy on your soul, proud lord, for your body will be mine!"

And, leaving him standing as if transfixed to the ground, I sprang upon my steed, and rode away with Eustace the Strong towards the spot where the prince had placed his banner on a bush and caused his squires to pitch his red pavilion.

CHAPTER LXVI

THE SCOTS AT POICTIERS

I HAVE mentioned, in an earlier part of my narrative, that, when John of Valois was on his way from Paris to Poitiers to intercept the Prince of Wales, some Scottish nobles and knights, including Lord Douglas, Sir Archibald Douglas, and Sir William Ramsay, who had assumed the Cross and were under a vow to repair to the Holy Land, so far forgot the oaths they had taken as to come and offer their swords to aid the cause of France; and I have said that they were gladly welcomed by their ancient allies. Moreover, they were treated with high distinction, and, on the day of battle, Lord Douglas and the Scots were assigned an honourable post in that battalion of the French army which John of Valois commanded in person, and in the conflict they fought bravely. But, when defeat stared the French in the face, Lord

Douglas, who had by no means anticipated such a close to an enterprise in favour of which the odds were so great, and into which he had thrown his energies, became excessively alarmed, and nervously eager to escape.

"By St. Bride!" said he, "I dread so much falling into the hands of the English, that, rather than become their prisoner, I should elect to die at once."

Accordingly, Lord Douglas, when he saw that the engagement must end in the discomfiture of the French, lost no time in attempting to save himself by flight, and, with many of his companions, succeeded in escaping. But some of his friends had no such good fortune. Both Sir Archibald Douglas and Sir William Ramsay were taken prisoners; and the former being in magnificent armour, was naturally supposed by his captors to be some great lord who could pay an immense ransom.

Nothing, indeed, but the extraordinary presence of mind which was displayed by his comrade in captivity could have saved Sir Archibald Douglas from the inconvenience of enduring a long imprisonment, or paying a large ransom.

But in this wise did Ramsay contrive to set his companion in arms at liberty.

It was several hours after the battle had been won and the victory secured, and the English were about to disencumber Archibald Douglas of his sumptuous armour, when Ramsay, stepping suddenly forward, eyed his fellow-prisoner with a look of fierce indignation, and, pretending to be in a violent rage, seized him by the collar.

"You impudent rascal!" said he, affecting to treat Douglas as a servant, "how comes it, in the name of the fiend, that you are thus decked out in your master's armour?"

Douglas, perceiving the scheme at a glance, did not answer, but looked the picture of convicted imposture and conscious guilt.

"Come hither, knave, and pull off my boots," continued Ramsay, determined to lose no time in executing the project so well conceived.

Nor did Douglas fail to play his part skilfully. In fact, perceiving that his escape was becoming almost a matter of certainty, he approached as if trembling, and, kneeling

down, pulled off one of the boots; and, while he was busy with the other, Ramsay, seizing that which was on the ground, beat him soundly.

"How is this?" asked the English who were present; "surely the person whom you have just beaten is a lord of high rank?"

"What!" cried Ramsay with the utmost scorn, "do you call him a lord? He is a scullion and a base knave, and I warrant he has rifled his master's corpse. Go, you villain, to the field, search for the body of my cousin, your master, and when you have found it return hither, that I may give him decent burial."

"But his ransom?" said the English.

"Well," answered Ramsay, "I will pay the sum of forty shillings, which is more than he is worth—body, bones, and all."

Not entertaining the slightest suspicion of the trick that was being played at their expense, the English accepted the ransom that was offered, and Ramsay, having once more soundly buffeted his comrade, sent him about his business.

"Get you gone, sirrah!" cried he, pushing him roughly away; and then whispered, "Fly!"

Douglas did not require a second hint.

Now it happened that Eustace the Strong had been quartered in the same place as the Scots; and, knowing well who they were, he was greatly diverted with the scene that was enacted before his eyes; and, when I visited him somewhat later, he talked merrily on the subject.

"What?" asked I; "mean you that the Scot has escaped without paying his ransom?"

"In truth," replied Eustace, "he has escaped, but his ransom has been paid for him, and it amounted to forty shillings; and, certes, Sir Squire, if you would name as moderate a ransom for me, I should not long continue your prisoner; for I have a wife at home who is an Englishwoman, and I would not that she fancied her countrymen had cut me into mincemeat."

"On my faith, Eustace," said I, "I cannot do you the injustice of rating you too low; but I will, at sunrise, name such a ransom as you can easily pay without hurting

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your fortune, and you can have your liberty to-morrow if you promise to pay the amount to me before Christmas, at Bordeaux."

"Thanks for your courtesy," replied Eustace gladly; "and, trust me, I will not fail to requite it."

"And now," said I, "if I could only reclaim the Scottish bird that has flown!"

"Archibald Douglas is too knowing a bird to let you put salt on his tail, under the circumstances," answered Eustace; "as well try to catch a wandering star."

CHAPTER LXVII

THE VICTORS AND THE VANQUISHED

It was to recall his people from the pursuit that the Prince of Wales set his banner on a bush, and ordered to "sound trumpets to the return." Nevertheless, it was not till after vespers that the chase was at an end, and that the English returned to their camp.

Ere this, however, the result of the conflict, so far as the French were concerned, was accurately known, and it was bruited about that, while not fewer than six thousand men of all sorts were left dead on the field, seventeen counts and a multitude of barons, knights, and squires were prisoners, with John of Valois and Philip his son. Indeed, when the English collected, they found they had twice as many prisoners as themselves. A very few persons of distinction among the English were missing. One of these was Roger, Lord De Ov.

Day drew to a close; the lights began to twinkle in the city of Poitiers; evening fell over the plains between Beauvoir and Mapertuis; and where lately the battle had raged with such vehemence all was now silent; and, while Ramsay and Douglas were deluding their captors, the Prince of Wales gave a supper in his pavilion to John of Valois and many of the French nobles, and knights, and squires who had been taken. Nor was there now any lack of good cheer among the English, most of whom had not

tasted bread for three long days; for the French had brought with them plenty of provisions, not even neglecting to provide themselves with wine to celebrate the victory which they were not destined to gain.

Nor was it merely provisions which fell into the hands of the English. In fact, the French had come to Poitiers not only magnificently arrayed, but magnificently furnished with articles of luxury. Great and of high value was the spoil, including rich jewels, gold and silver plate, and trunks stuffed full of furred mantles, and belts weighty from their gold and silver. If it had not been known that the French came with a certainty of conquering, it might have been supposed that they had brought their wealth with them to bribe their victors to clemency.

When the hour of supper arrived the feast was spread, and the tables were covered with the viands that formed part of the spoil. Every preparation having been made, the prince conducted John of Valois and his son to the pavilion; and, having seated them at an elevated table, at which also were placed the Count of Tankerville and the Count of Ponthieu, he caused the French nobles, and knights, and squires who were captives to range themselves at the other tables; and, this done, he himself insisted on serving John with his own hand, and resisted all intreaties to sit down.

“No,” said he, in the spirit of that chivalry of which he was the most renowned representative; “I do not deem myself worthy of such an honour; nor does it appertain to me to seat myself at the table of so great a prince or so valiant a champion as you have, by your actions, proved yourself this day.”

“By Our Lady!” said the French knights admiringly, “it will, in truth, be said of the prince as has been said of his father, that he is a most noble gentleman who knows how to honour his enemies as well as his friends.”

And the English, who had witnessed his interview with James, Lord Audley, highly applauded the sentiment.

But still John of Valois looked sad and disconsolate, and even the good wine which he himself had brought, with an idea of quaffing it under very different circumstances, failed to elevate his mood; and the prince,

sympathising with his captive's melancholy, endeavoured to administer comfort.

"Sire," said he, "make good cheer, and let not your meal be the less hearty because God Almighty has not gratified your wishes as to the event of the day ; for it has frequently been the fate of the most famous warriors to taste defeat as well as victory. Wherefore be not cast down, nor give way to despondence, seeing that my lord and father is a prince of noble and generous soul, and will show you every honour and friendship in his power, and will arrange your ransom reasonably, and on such terms that you will always henceforth remain friends."

John of Valois bowed courteously, but he did not utter a word ; and he looked the picture of woe, for his intense pride had been wounded to the quick.

"Moreover," added the prince, still eager to console, "I do not speak to flatter you, but simply speak the truth, when I say that, of all the warriors of France, you have this day given your adversaries most to do, and won the highest renown ; and all those on our side who have observed the actions of each party unanimously allow this to be your due, and, in reflecting on the deeds of arms wrought this day, they award you the prize and garland."

As the Prince of Wales concluded, there were murmurs of praise from every one present ; and the French knights failed not to do justice to the chivalry of their youthful conqueror.

CHAPTER LXVIII

THE MARCH TO BORDEAUX

NEXT morning the Prince of Wales gave orders for re-suming the march to Bordeaux, which had been, three days earlier, interrupted in so unwelcome a manner ; and the English, packing up and loading their baggage and booty, decamped from the scene of their marvellous victory.

Meanwhile great alarm prevailed in Poitiers, and during the night the Lord of Roy entered the city with a

hundred lances to guard it in case of attack. But the apprehension of the citizens was groundless, and the valour of the Lord of Roy was not put to the test. Some of the more fiery among the English, indeed, would have relished the excitement of taking the city by assault, but the prince, calm in triumph as he had been in danger, was more prudent.

"No," said he, "no need to attack fortresses by the way. Our numbers are few, and methinks we shall do great things if we convey the King of France and his son, and all our booty, in safety to Bordeaux."

Accordingly, the prince passed on, and, meeting with no resistance, proceeded by easy marches, through Poitou and Saintonge, and, on reaching Blaye, crossed the Garonne.

One day, during the march, the prince summoned me to his side, and, having intimated his intention of despatching me to England with intelligence of the victory won at Poitiers, he turned the conversation on Lord Audley.

"How fares the noble knight?" asked the prince.

"In truth, my lord," replied I, "he is still weak from loss of blood, but he has proved that his munificence is on a par with his valour."

"What mean you?" inquired the prince with curiosity.

"Just this, my lord," I answered, "that, when carried to his tent after the battle, he called the four squires who had attended him, and said, 'Gentlemen, it has pleased the prince to give me five hundred marks as a yearly inheritance, although for such gift I have done him very trifling service. What glory I may have gained has been through your means, on which account I wish to reward you. I therefore,' added Lord Audley, 'give and resign into your hands the gift which the prince has bestowed on me. I disinherit myself of it, and give it to you simply, without the power of revoking it.'"

On hearing this the prince was greatly interested, and sent for Lord Audley. Accordingly, the wounded knight was brought forward in his litter, and the prince, having received him very graciously, proceeded to the subject of the grant.

"My Lord James," said he, "I have been informed that, after you had taken leave of me and returned to your

tent, you made a present to your four squires of the gift I presented to you."

"Sir," replied Lord Audley, "you have heard the truth."

"But," continued the prince, "if it be true, I should like to know why you did so, and if the gift was not agreeable to you."

"My lord," answered Audley, "I assure you it was most agreeable, and I will tell you the reasons which induced me to bestow it on my squires."

"Go on, my Lord James," said the prince, seeing that the knight hesitated.

"Well," continued Lord Audley, "these four squires who are here have long and loyally served me on many great and dangerous occasions, and, till the day I made them this present, I had no way of rewarding them; and never in my life were they of such help to me as at Poitiers; for, sir, I am a single man, and can do no more than my powers admit, and it was through their aid that I accomplished my vow, and should have paid for doing so with my life if they had not been near me. When, therefore, I consider their courage and fidelity, I should not have been grateful had I not rewarded them. Thank God, sir, I have sufficient to maintain my state, and wealth has never yet failed me. I can only ask pardon if in this I have acted contrary to your wishes, and promise that, as hitherto, my squires and myself will serve you faithfully."

"My Lord James," said the prince, "I do not in the least blame you for what you have done. On the contrary, I highly appreciate your bounty to the squires whom you praise so much."

"Sir, I thank you," said Lord Audley, glad to hear the prince was satisfied.

"Moreover," added the prince, smiling graciously, "I not only most readily confirm the gift you have made to your squires, but further insist on your accepting, for yourself, six hundred marks yearly, on the same terms and conditions as the former gift."

Lord Audley's heart was too full to admit of his answering, but his silence was much more eloquent than words

could have been ; and I, riding by the side of his litter, could not help saying to myself—

“This is indeed a rare kind of contest, where merit in the subject and munificence in the prince strive which shall be the greater.”

On reaching Bordeaux, the Prince of Wales conducted John of Valois to the monastery of St. Andrew ; and mighty were the feasts at which the clergy and citizens entertained the prince, and great was the joy with which they received his royal captive. Soon after their arrival the Cardinal of Perigord reached Bordeaux as ambassador for the pope. But the prince was highly enraged at the cardinal, on account of his men, under the Castellan of Amposta, having fought against the English at Poitiers, and, for a fortnight, sternly refused to see him. At length, through the mediation of the Captal of Buch, the cardinal was admitted to an interview, and exculpated himself so clearly that the young conqueror declared himself perfectly satisfied.

All winter the Prince of Wales remained with the English and Gascon lords at Bordeaux. There was much feasting, and most of the knights, who had acquired large sums as the ransom of prisoners, spent, in riot and merriment, all that their swords had gained them. But this I only know from report ; for, within a few hours after the prince conducted John of Valois through the gate of Bordeaux, I was on the sea, and sailing for the English coast.

CHAPTER LXIX

THE PRINCE AND HIS CAPTIVE

No news could have excited more joy and enthusiasm than pervaded England when rumour carried through the land tidings that the English had, against fearful odds, won another battle on the Continent, and that the king's adversary was a captive in the hands of the king's son.

In every church thanks were solemnly offered for the victory of Poitiers ; in every town and village the victory was celebrated with festivities ; and on every hill bonfires

blazed in honour of the conquerors. Nothing could exceed the respect paid to such of the warriors of Poitiers as, during the winter, returned from Bordeaux. I, being the first, came in for rather more than my full share of the glory; and, as the bearer of the earliest intelligence, I was knighted by King Edward, who did not on this occasion forget the service I had previously rendered in saving his daughter from the horns of the wild bull in the forest of Windsor.

And now there was much anxiety to ascertain what was to be done with John of Valois, and when the Prince of Wales was to bring him and his son to England. But on this point considerable obstacles arose. In fact, the Gascons were most unwilling that John should be taken away from Bordeaux, and did not hesitate to express themselves strongly on the subject.

“Sir,” said they to the prince, “we owe you, as becomes us, all honour and obedience; but it is not our intention that you should carry the King of France from us, who contributed so largely to place him in the situation where he now is. Thank God, he is in good health, and in a good city; and we are strong enough to guard him against any force which France could send to rescue him.”

“Gentlemen,” replied the prince, “I do not doubt your power to guard him; but the king, my father, wishes him to go to England, and, as we are both very sensible of the services you have rendered, you may depend on being handsomely rewarded for them.”

“Nevertheless,” urged the Gascons, appearing to grow more stubborn every moment, “we cannot consent to his departure.”

“What, in the name of the saints, is to be done?” asked the prince, taking Lord Cobham and Sir John Chandos aside.

“Sir,” said Lord Cobham, “you must consider the avaricious nature of the Gascons in dealing with them.”

“Yes,” added Sir John Chandos, laughing, “there is only one way of dealing with such men: offer them a handsome sum of florins, and they will comply with all you wish.”

Accordingly a hundred thousand florins were distributed among the lords of Gascony ; and in April the prince embarked, with his captive, for England. Landing at Sandwich, they travelled on to Canterbury ; and having remained there for three days, to refresh themselves and offer at the shrine of Thomas à Becket, they pursued their way, by short journeys, to London.

Meanwhile the news that the Prince of Wales and John of Valois had landed in England reached King Edward, and spread abroad ; and, as they approached London, the public curiosity became great. At length, on the 24th of April, they entered London, John riding the white charger which, like himself, had been taken at Poitiers, and the prince bestriding a black pony, and treating his captive with marked respect. John was richly dressed, and wore a crown of ornament on his head ; the prince was plain even to affectation, and his head was uncovered as he entered the city. But, after all, this was so much dumb show ; and the populace instinctively felt such to be the case ; and nobody could examine the countenances of the two with attention and intelligence without ceasing to feel much surprise that the man who, on the decisive day, had an army of sixty thousand, was a captive, and that the youth who, on the decisive day, had an army of eight thousand, was a conqueror. One had all the weakness of a Valois, the other all the strength of a Plantagenet.

Riding through London, while the crowd surged and swayed, in their eagerness to get a closer view, John and his son Philip were conducted to the Savoy, and, after being lodged in that palace, were visited by the king and queen, who did all in their power to console John in his captivity. Nor did the unfortunate man disdain their kind offices. Indeed, adversity had softened his temper, and he was disposed to make the best of circumstances. But it was different with his son. Young Philip's natural ferocity became more intense every hour, and some extraordinary scenes resulted from his unrestrained violence.

On the very day after the arrival of John of Valois in London, and while he was feasting with the court at

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Westminster, Philip made such a display of temper as shocked everybody who witnessed his conduct. Observing that the cup-bearer served King Edward with wine before his father, he started from the table, and attempted to box the cup-bearer's ears.

"Varlet!" cried he, foaming with fury, "you have no right to serve the King of England before the King of France; for, though my father is unfortunate, he is still the sovereign of your king."

Edward and Philippa endeavoured to seem diverted at the boy's rudeness, and laughed over the awkward incident. But, a few days later, he fastened a quarrel on the Prince of Wales, while playing at chess, which was more awkward still. The king and queen, however, decided the dispute in his favour; but nobody aware of the circumstances could doubt that the boy was bad by nature, and that his education had not been such as to eradicate the vices which he inherited.

"On my faith," said the Lord Merley to me as we one day talked over the quarrel which he had with the prince at chess, "I wish the Gascons had kept that young tiger to tame at Bordeaux; for, if his ferocity continues, I see no way of dealing with him but putting him in a cage, and committing him to the care of the keeper of the wild beasts in the Tower."

"In truth, my lord," replied I, laughing, "I should be inclined to agree with you if I did not remember how fiercely and bravely he fought by his father's side at Poitiers long after his three elder brothers were flying from the field, as if the foul fiend had been behind, and ready to devour them."

"Doubtless," said Lord Merley, "he possesses courage; but such as, whether in young or old, is the courage, not of a brave man, but of a wild beast."

CHAPTER LXX

DEATH OF QUEEN ISABEL

SOON after the Prince of Wales brought John of Valois as a captive, to London, Isabel the Fair, mother of King Edward, died at Castle Rising, in Norfolk. No great impression was produced by the news; for the royal lady was not known, even by sight, to the generation which won and celebrated the battles of Cressy and Poitiers; and, but for the annual visits of the king to his mother, her existence would almost have been forgotten. Ever since the execution of Roger de Mortimer she had lived at Castle Rising, secluded from the world. Her comfort was, indeed, attended to, and she was enabled to maintain a household suitable to her state, with ladies, and knights, and esquires of honour to attend her; and at times she was allowed to witness plays, which were exhibited for her diversion in the court of the castle. But she was forbidden to go abroad, or to show herself in public; and, as I have said, but for King Edward's visits, Englishmen would have forgotten the woman whom their fathers branded as "the she-wolf of France."

But, however that may have been, about the time when Queen Isabel was buried with much pomp in the church of the Grey Friars, in London, I was, one evening, seated in my chamber at Westminster, speculating on the probability which there was of the Prince of Wales going to take up his residence in Guienne, of which he had been created Duke, and of my attending him to Bordeaux, when a visitor was announced, and a lady entered. I immediately recognised Eleanor de Gubium, and I started as I remembered how she had pledged herself, as soon as the queen was no more, to find me out, whether in court or camp, and reveal the secret of my birth. It is true that my curiosity had considerably diminished, owing to the information which I had obtained from Sir John Copeland and others, but still as I recognised this woman, whose conduct towards me had been so mysterious, I felt something of the old eagerness to know all.

"Lady," said I, as I rose to receive her, "you remember your promise, and you have come to redeem it."

"In coming," replied she, "I have two objects. The first is to do an errand; the second is to clear up a mystery. I will first do mine errand, and then I will clear up the mystery."

"And what is your errand?" asked I.

"My errand," she answered, "is to pay the ransom of my husband, who was your prisoner at Poitiers."

"On my faith," said I, bluntly, "it seems to me that there must be some mistake; inasmuch as I had but one prisoner; and he was a French squire, known as Eustace the Strong; and he was to have paid his ransom at Bordeaux before Christmas."

"Even so," replied Eleanor; "I am the wife of him whom you call Eustace the Strong; and, since the ransom was not paid at Bordeaux, seeing that you were not there to receive it, I have brought the gold to Westminster."

And as she spoke she placed on the table a bag containing the sum for which we had covenanted.

"Verily," exclaimed I, "this is passing strange, and much am I taken by surprise, for I never thought of again hearing of Eustace the Strong, still less of your coming hither to pay his ransom in the character of his wife."

"However, sir knight," said she, suddenly rousing herself to energy, "we have more important business. You say you remember the pledge I gave; and now I am ready to tell how you were saved from a cruel and an obscure fate."

"And what might that fate have been?" asked I.

"A fate which, to one of your aspiring vein," replied she, "would have been misery itself. When Edward, Lord De Ov, was executed at Winchester for participating in the conspiracy of the Earl of Kent, Roger De Ov, being, by the favour of Roger De Mortimer and Queen Isabel, put in possession of the castle and baronies of his murdered brother, was all anxiety to remove that brother's widow and son from his path, and the path of his heirs; and my mother, who was a Frenchwoman, and one of the queen's gentlewomen, was intrusted with the duty of conveying them beyond sea. The widow was to have been

placed in a religious house, and the son to have been separated from her, and brought up among the handicraftsmen of a town in Flanders, in utter unconsciousness of his country and kindred. No chance of golden spurs had such a project been executed. Confess, sir knight."

"None, in truth," muttered I, "but, lady, proceed. I am impatient to hear all."

"Well," continued Eleanor, "it would have been executed but for the interference of my father. Being a squire of the North, and attached to the house of De Ov, he would not hear of the murdered lord's widow or son being conveyed from the country; and so, while my mother pretended to execute the command, he went to Adam of Greenmead and implored him out of his loyalty to the Merleys, from whom sprang the lady, to shelter and protect her and her son so secretly that their existence in England should never be discovered. Briefly, then, the yeoman consented, and, at great risk—for few dared then to defy the vengeance of the queen, or her favourite—he received Edward Lord De Ov's widow and orphan at his homestead, giving out that one was his daughter, the other was his grandson; and there you remained, your identity known to me alone, till, in an evil hour, I, galled by some taunting words of young Roger De Ov, threatened him with producing the true heir, and, unhappily, told enough, not only to raise his suspicions, but to set him on your track. Hardly were you admitted as one of the prince's pages ere he was aware of your being the injured and disinherited kinsman; and you know the rest, and will pardon me for having, when mad and under the influence of a temptation I could not withstand, lent myself to aid in alluring you into his power, though I dreamt not then that his views in regard to you were so diabolical, and I should never have consented to his wishes being gratified."

"Lady," said I, as she concluded, "I have listened to your tale, and it is all very much as I suspected; and, having mused long over the circumstances, I declare on my faith, that I see not how I can avail myself of the knowledge without ruining my prospects, such as they are. If I understand you aright, I could not reveal my wrongs

to the world without mixing up the name of Queen Isabel with the story in a way that would do her little credit ; and how could I, favoured as I have been by the king and his son, do aught that would bring fresh obloquy on the memory of a woman who was mother of the one, grandmother of the other ?”

“What !” exclaimed she, manifesting much surprise, “would you not risk royal favour and a descent on the ladder of life to prove yourself the heir of an illustrious surname and a magnificent castle and baronies on the banks of the Wear ?”

“For the surname,” answered I proudly, “I am so pleased with that which I have made for myself, that I should hardly relish exchanging it for another ; and for the castle and baronies, I have concluded, after reflection, that with the king’s favour gone, they would be further out of my reach than they are now.”

“Shame upon your indifference !” cried Eleanor with a flashing eye. “Had my father foreseen that you would show a spirit so unworthy of a De Ov, he would hardly have hazarded his life, and the life of another, to save you from the fate to which you were destined. Nor suppose, for a moment, that inaction in your case secures you safety. I, who know your enemy right well, tell you for your comfort that he will never desist from his efforts till your ruin is accomplished.”

“But my Lord De Ov has disappeared,” said I calmly ; “mayhap he is dead ; and I neither war with the dead nor expect the dead to war with me.”

“Delude not yourself,” replied she scornfully. “Roger De Ov lives, and lives with as strong a desire as ever to witness your ruin. He is now prisoner in the house of the Templars at Luz ; but ere long his ransom will be paid, and he will be at freedom. And then look to yourself.”

“In truth,” said I, musing, “this does alter the case, and I must look to myself.”

CHAPTER LXXI

WHAT BEFELL LORD DE OV

ELEANOR DE GUBIUM was not mistaken as to the fate of Lord De Ov. On the day when the battle of Poitiers was fought and won he had been under the necessity of surrendering, rescue or no rescue. In fact, no sooner was the haughty baron saved from the danger of perishing by the sword of Eustace the Strong than he incurred the danger of dying by the lance of John de Helennes, that squire of Picardy whom I had met at Mount Moreville, when he was attached to Sir Lancelot de Lorris, and when he was intrusted by that gallant knight with his bloodstained banner to convey to one of the ladies of Poix.

It seems that at Poitiers, John de Helennes fought in the division of John of Valois, and bore himself bravely; but when he saw his countrymen dispersing on all hands, and perceived that the day was irrecoverably lost, he bethought himself of flight; and meeting his page with a fresh horse, mounted, with the object of making a speedy escape. But in this endeavour he was destined to be rudely interrupted; for Lord De Ov, smarting from wounds of the depth of which himself was quite unconscious, being by this time remounted and not in the most celestial mood, no sooner observed the squire spurring away from the lost field, than, setting his spear in rest, he dashed after the fugitive with the hope of taking him prisoner.

“Sir squire,” cried the English baron, in a loud and menacing voice, “I pray you return and meet me fairly. You cannot escape thus; for my steed is the fleeter of the two; and if you turn not I will smite you in the back, like a craven.”

“By my halidame, you never shall!” cried John de Helennes on hearing this challenge; and, halting, he wheeled round his steed to meet his pursuer face to face.

Now it was the object of Lord De Ov to fix his lance in the target of John de Helennes, while John’s object was to strike his adversary’s helmet—a mark much more

difficult to hit, but which, when hit, makes the shock more violent and difficult to resist; and, when they met with all the force they were capable, Lord De Ov failed to fix his lance in the squire's target, while John, striking his antagonist fairly and truly on the helmet, brought him to the ground with such violence that the baron rolled over and over, grasping the grass with his hands as he did so. Upon this the squire sprang from his horse, and, drawing his sword, advanced on his prostrate foe.

"Surrender yourself, rescue or no rescue," said the squire, eager to insure himself a captive who, from his appearance, was likely to pay a handsome ransom.

"First tell me your name," replied Lord De Ov, who, seeing the necessity of making the best of circumstances, immediately placed his temper under control.

"My name is John de Helennes," said the squire, "and I pray you to tell me who you are."

"In truth," answered the other, "I am Lord De Ov, and have a handsome castle on the river Wear, near Durham."

"Lord De Ov!" exclaimed John de Helennes, who was delighted to hear that his vanquished foe was a personage of rank and wealth; "I well know your name as one of the great barons in the North of England; and you shall be my prisoner."

"Well," said Lord De Ov, "I willingly surrender myself, for you have fairly conquered me; and I will be your prisoner, rescue or no rescue."

"In that case," said John de Helennes, "I will place you in safety, and, as you appear to be wounded, I will take care that you are healed."

Having thus arranged matters to his satisfaction, John de Helennes sheathed his sword, and, having bound up the wounds of Lord De Ov, placed him on horseback, and led him at a foot pace to Châtelherault, and there rested for fifteen days while the captive lord's wounds were healed and medicine administered.

Gradually, under the kind treatment of his captor, Lord De Ov began to recover from his wounds and bruises; and when he was sufficiently strong to travel, John de Helennes placed him in a litter and conducted him safely to the

ancient house of the Templars at Luz, where the cure was completed. But it was not until twelve months had passed that Lord De Ov was recovered so thoroughly as to think of returning to England. At the end of that time, however, though still somewhat lame, he prepared to depart from Picardy. Before leaving he paid, as his ransom, the sum of six thousand nobles; and, on the profit which he made out of his noble captive, John de Helennes became a knight. It is not necessary as yet to tell what became of Roger, Lord De Ov; it is sufficient to say that he was rapidly approaching the edge and crisis of his fate.

CHAPTER LXXII

MARRIAGE OF THE BLACK PRINCE

It was natural that the king and people of England should at this time feel anxious that the heir to the crown of the Plantagenets should unite his fate with some princess worthy of sharing his rank: and, ere this, several matches which seemed not unsuitable had been proposed. In the fifth year of King Edward's reign a marriage had been talked of between his son and a daughter of Philip of Valois; in the twelfth year of King Edward's reign a marriage was proposed between his son and a daughter of the Duke of Brabant, and in the nineteenth year of King Edward's reign, a marriage was proposed between his son and the daughter of the King of Portugal. But each of these matrimonial schemes came to naught, and the heir of England, after leading the van at Cressy, and winning the battle of Poitiers, still remained without a wife to share his counsels or a son to cheer his hopes. Nor did he evince any desire to form such an alliance as the nation, which regarded him with so much pride, seemed to expect; for, from boyhood, the Prince of Wales had cherished a romantic affection for his fair cousin Joan, Countess of Kent; and, circumstances having proved unpropitious to

their union, he seemed to steel his heart against any second attachment. But destiny is stronger than circumstances; and, after years of melancholy reflection and vain regrets, the prince had, at length, an opportunity of wedding the lady of his heart.

Joan, Countess of Kent, was a princess of the house of Plantagenet, and one of the most comely and captivating women of whom England could boast. Indeed, at an early age her beauty won for her the name of the Fair Maid of Kent. She was daughter of Edmund, Earl of Kent, son of the first King Edward, and, having been born about the time when her father perished on the scaffold, during the domination of Queen Isabel and Roger de Mortimer, she was, of course, a year or two older than the hero whose heart she had so thoroughly captivated.

It is said that the course of true love never does run smooth, and of this the prince and his fair kinswoman were doomed to experience the truth. In fact, King Edward and Queen Philippa had other views for their son, and the obstacles in the way of a marriage were such that the prince despaired of overcoming them; and, while he, debarred from indulging in the passions of the heart, gave his time and thoughts to war and ambition, Joan, after waiting for a few years with the vague hope of some change occurring to render their union possible, bethought herself of making up for lost time, and so managed matters that she became the object of contention between two men, each of whom claimed her as wife. Of these, one was Sir Thomas Holand, a knight of Lancaster; the other was William, Earl of Salisbury, son of that fair countess in whose honour King Edward instituted the Order of the Garter.

Naturally the dispute was warm, and caused much scandal; for it appeared that Joan, after being solemnly betrothed to Salisbury, had given her hand to Holand, who, albeit of inferior rank, was a handsome and accomplished chevalier, and when Holand went to the continent Salisbury took possession of the bride. At length the pope was appealed to; and his holiness having settled the dispute by pronouncing the Countess of Kent to be

wife of Holand, Salisbury indicated his acquiescence in the decision by marrying another woman.

Affairs having reached this stage, no hope remained to the Prince of Wales save to forget the past; and in this respect he, no doubt, did in some degree succeed. Nevertheless, the romance was not at an end. Soon after the battle of Poitiers, Holand went the way of all flesh, and Joan Plantagenet, now thirty-two, but comely and captivating as in girlhood, was free to give her hand to whom she pleased.

Of course such a woman was not likely to be without wooers, and it speedily became known that one of the nobles attached to the prince's service sought her in marriage. This noble was Roger, Lord de Ov. Nor, in aspiring to the hand of her who had been sung of as the Fair Maid of Kent, was he deemed guilty of presumption. Young, handsome, courteous in hall and strong in battle, with a great name and broad baronies, he was not the person whom the widow of a Holand was likely to reject on the score of dignity. But it appeared that the widowed countess was not to be so easily won; and the noble, finding that his suit did not prosper, implored the prince to interfere in his behalf. The result was not what might have been anticipated; for the lady rejected the advice with a disdain which was almost too much for the prince's patience.

"Fair kinswoman," said he, "it seems to me that you scarce know your own mind."

"My lord," replied the countess with much animation, "never did I know my mind better: when I was under ward I was disposed of by others, but now——"

"But now?" said the prince, whose imagination rapidly conducted him back to the time when he himself was the most ardent of her admirers.

"Now," continued she, making a great effort to speak out, "I am mistress of my own actions, and I cannot but call to mind that I am of the royal blood of England. I cannot therefore cast myself away beneath my rank; and I am fully resolved never to marry again, unless I can marry a prince of virtue and quality."

Needless would it be to dwell on the scene that

followed. Suffice it to say that as the countess spoke the prince felt the old flame rekindle in his heart, and when she concluded he was kneeling at her feet.

But still the course of true love was not to run smooth. No sooner did the prince set his heart on a union with his fair kinswoman than formidable obstacles presented themselves. Both the Court and the Church were decidedly hostile. The king and queen were more averse than ever to their son wedding a woman whose reputation was not the better for the wear; and the Church objected, not only on account of the nearness of blood, but because the prince, by appearing as godfather to the sons of the countess, had for ever precluded himself from becoming her husband. Both obstacles, however, were overcome. After some delay the king and queen gave a reluctant consent; and, after some persuasion, the pope gave a dispensation and an absolution, to admit of the marriage being celebrated.

It was in the royal chapel at Windsor that the ceremony took place; and soon after the Prince and Princess of Wales departed for the castle of Berkhamstead. For a time they kept their state at that royal manor; but a Parliament being held in the winter to form establishments for the king's son, objected to the prince's residing in England.

"We consider," said the Parliament, "that the Prince of Wales keeps a grand and noble state, as he is well entitled to do, for he is valiant, and powerful, and rich. But he has a great inheritance in Guienne, where provisions and everything else abound, and we therefore deem that he ought to reside in his duchy, which will furnish him with the means of maintaining as grand an establishment as he likes."

On hearing that such an opinion had been expressed by the Parliament of England, the Prince of Wales at once consented to repair to Guienne, and immediately made preparations for the voyage. Before he and the princess left Berkhamstead, the king and queen visited them at that manor to say farewell; and it was on this occasion that Sir John Froissart heard the prophecy which he has inserted in his chronicle of the wars in England and France.

“A curious thing,” says he, “happened on my first going to England, which I have much thought on since. I was in the service of Queen Philippa; and when she accompanied King Edward and the royal family to take leave of the Prince and Princess of Wales at Berkhamstead, on their departure for Guienne, I heard an old knight, in conversation with some ladies, say—

“‘We have a book called Brut, which, among other predictions, declares that neither the Prince of Wales, nor any of King Edward’s sons, will be King of England, but that the descendants of the Duke of Lancaster will reign.’”

But enough. Why should I forestal the day when England had to mourn the death of her hero, or anticipate the evil times on which his ill-starred son fell? At present all is hopeful and promising, and no shadows cross the path of the royal pair as they depart to embark for the land from which they are to return under circumstances so sad. Away melancholy memories, and let me still think of him as he was when he kept his state at the monastery of St. Andrew, ere he marched forth to win that victory which set his name once more ringing throughout Europe, and ruined his prospects to re-seat Don Pedro on the throne of Castille.

CHAPTER LXXIII

THE CHALLENGE

It was the month of May, and Gaston Phæbus, Count of Foix, was the guest of the Prince and Princess of Wales; and thither also had come Roger, Lord De Ov; and I, having just returned from an expedition to Angoulême, was seated at dinner in the city of Bordeaux, the day being a Wednesday, when Sir Richard de Pontcharden, the Marshal of Guienne, came to me, and said—

“Winram, know you of what things you are openly accused?”

“On my faith I do not, Sir Richard,” replied I; “and beshrew me if I can guess to what you allude.”

"In truth," said Sir Richard, kindly taking my hand, "I fully credit what you say. Nevertheless, I deem it right to warn you that, since your departure, there has been a plot discovered for delivering some towns up to the French, and that of this plot your name is bruited about as one of the authors."

I was literally struck dumb with amazement; and I gazed on the marshal in silence.

"Why gaze you on me thus?" asked he.

"By my sooth," replied I, suddenly recovering my speech, "I may well indeed be astonished at such a charge, considering that even the existence of such a plot was unknown to me. But who may be my accuser?"

"I know not," answered Sir Richard, significantly; "but this I do know, that the prince partly believes it, and that, were I in your place, I should hasten to the prince's presence, and demand his name forthwith."

"You are right," said I with energy. "Not a moment must be lost in meeting this calumny and this calumniator face to face, and, it may be, hand to hand."

And without hesitation I proceeded to crave an audience of the prince, and was, without delay, admitted to his presence.

As I presented myself, I felt how truly the marshal had spoken. It was evident that I was the object of strong suspicion. Even if I had not been warned, I should have felt instinctively that something was wrong. Never had young Edward's aspect been to me so grave or so ungracious. But I was too strong in the consciousness of my innocence to be cast down, even before the frown of a prince and a Plantagenet. In truth, I was perfectly calm; and, after bending my knee, I drew myself to my full height, and spoke clearly and boldly.

"My lord," said I, not without scorn of the thought of being suspected, "it has come to my knowledge that I have, in my absence, been accused of conspiring with the enemies of England. I am here to deny the charge, and to demand to be placed face to face with my accuser."

The prince did not answer even a word; but he ordered Lord De Ov to be summoned; and when my adversary

appeared, which he did almost on the instant, I felt, with something like exultation, that at length there was a prospect of our quarrel being brought to a decisive issue, and that, with a just cause, I could not fail to conquer.

The prince, meanwhile, turned to me, and, with the frown still on his brow, said gravely—

“There stands your accuser.”

And now I cannot relate what passed ; but a furious dispute, which the presence of the prince scarcely served to moderate, certainly did take place ; and I recited all the hostility Lord De Ov had evinced towards me, and the persecution to which I had been exposed at his hands, not forgetting the incident of Caen, on which I was loud, if not eloquent. But I did not stop even at this point. I traced the enmity to its origin. Vehemently I narrated all the wrongs which my father had suffered, and which I had vowed to avenge, and astounded the prince by stating in a voice of thunder, that this man, who now laboured to ruin my fair fame, bore the name and occupied the place which were mine by hereditary right. At length matters reached such a stage that I threw down my glove, and appealed to the god of battles ; and Lord De Ov expressed his willingness to submit the quarrel to the arbitrament of the sword.

But for a time there appeared, notwithstanding my entreaties, some doubt whether a combat would be permitted under the circumstances. In fact, the prince, who was perplexed by the turn which the quarrel had taken, entertained serious scruples. Fortunately, however, he consulted his guest, the Count of Foix ; and Gaston Phæbus, who enjoyed a high reputation for wisdom, after some meditation, decided in favour of allowing the duel.

“In truth,” said he, “I think that this is a case in which an appeal to the god of battles ought to be permitted ; for it is a case which no man, without great discretion and knowledge, could undertake to decide, one way or another ; and at all times, the judgment of God is more likely to be just than the judgment of the very justest man.”

“In the name of truth and justice,” exclaimed the

prince, "let the combat, then, take place; and may God and St. George defend the right!"

"Yes," replied the count; "it is decidedly a quarrel which can best be decided by a duel for death or life."

Accordingly, everything was settled; and, Monday being fixed on as the day for the mortal combat, the accuser and the accused were placed under arrest till the time appointed, and preliminaries were arranged for the trial by battle.

CHAPTER LXXIV

TRIAL BY BATTLE

I HAVE said that it was the month of May, and the grass was green in the meads, the corn in ear, and the flowers in seed, when arrangements were made for the combat, which the Count of Foix had approved, and which the Prince of Wales had sanctioned; and, in a wide open space on the banks of the Garonne, the lists were erected and preparations made; and galleries were raised on one side for such lords as wished to be spectators; and, on the appointed day, the barons of Gascony and England and the citizens of Bordeaux came forth to witness a spectacle which promised much excitement.

It would hardly become me to relate my own exploits on such an occasion, even if my feelings had been such as to admit of my remembering distinctly what passed. But the truth is, that, calm as I might have seemed to observers, my anxiety was intense, and I scarce saw, scarce heard, anything around me, so completely was my mind bent and my attention concentrated on the coming conflict. I therefore deem it prudent to borrow an account of the duel from a chronicler who witnessed it without favour, and who described it with impartiality.

"At the hour appointed, Sir Arthur Winram and Roger, Lord De Ov, the two knights who were to perform this deed of arms, rode to where the tilts were to be performed, and entered the lists so well armed and equipped that nothing was wanting. Their spears and battle-axes

were brought to them, and each being mounted on the best of horses, placed himself about a bow-shot from his antagonist ; and they pranced about most gallantly, for they knew that every eye was upon them.

“ Having braced their targets, and examined each other through the visors of their helmets, they spurred on their horses, spear in hand ; and though they allowed their horses to gallop as they pleased, they advanced in as straight a line as if it had been drawn with a cord, and hit each other on the visors with such skill and force that all present allowed it was gallantly done. Lord De Ov’s lance was shivered into four pieces, which flew to a greater height than they could have been thrown. Sir Arthur Winram likewise struck his antagonist, but not with the same success ; and I will tell you why. It was because Lord De Ov had but slightly laced on his helmet, so that it was only held by one thong, which snapped at a blow, leaving him bareheaded.

“ Each knight passed the other ; and Sir Arthur Winram bore his lance without halting ; and they returned to their stations, when Lord De Ov’s helmet was fitted on again, and another lance given to him, while Sir Arthur grasped his own, which was not worsted. When ready, they set off full gallop (for excellent were their horses, and well did they know how to manage them), and again struck each other on the helmets, so that sparks of fire came out from them. Neither of their lances did this time break, and Sir Arthur received a very severe blow : and his lance hit the visor of his adversary without much effect, passing through and leaving it on the crupper of the horse, and Lord De Ov was once more bareheaded.

“ After this tilting, the knights dismounted, and made ready to continue the combat with swords ; and they made a very handsome appearance, for they were both stout and expert men at arms. Fighting on foot, they behaved with much courage. Sir Arthur Winram was, at the first, severely wounded, and his friends were much alarmed ; but, notwithstanding this disadvantage, he fought so stubbornly that he struck down his adversary, and was on the point of thrusting his sword through his

body, when the prince threw down his warder, and shouted, 'Hold! slay him not, unshriven and unabsolved. He is fairly vanquished.' Then Sir Arthur demanded of the spectators if he had done his duty; and when they replied that he had, the knight approached the prince, and after thanking him and the lords present for coming to see justice done, went, albeit sore wounded, to make his offering in the Church of St. Andrew."

I need not particularly narrate the events which followed this combat for life or death; how, in a few days after it was fought, the prince was convinced, by evidence which could not be doubted, that the plot in which I was accused of participating had no existence; and how King Edward, on hearing of everything connected with the business, swore that, come what might, justice should be done me, and that speedily. Ere the close of June my adversary had left Bordeaux for England, and so had I. But he returned to his native land to take the habit of a monk in a religious house which his ancestors had endowed; I to assume the name which I had received at the baptismal font, and, as son of Edward, Lord De Ov, to take possession of the castle and baronies in which, since the Norman Conquest, the chiefs of the house of De Ov had maintained feudal state.

CHAPTER LXXV

GLORY AND THE GRAVE

I HAD been some time in England when the Prince of Wales achieved the last of the great triumphs which enshrined his name in imperishable glory; and English men learned with pride that, on the south of the Ebro, the heir of England had, against great odds, fought a great battle, and won a great victory, to decide the fate of Castille and Leon.

It was some time after I left the city of Bordeaux that a guest, whose appearance created much interest, and excited much curiosity, arrived at the court of Guienne, and, being in extreme perplexity, demanded the aid of

the Prince of Wales. Already he was becoming known as Peter the Cruel. A few weeks earlier he had been King of Castille. But his bloodthirstiness and tyranny had disgusted his subjects; and his illegitimate brother, Henry of Trastamare, with the aid of Bertrand du Guesclin and the French, had found it no difficult matter to drive him from a kingdom where his unpopularity was so great. Exile, however, as Don Pedro was, he did not despair; for he knew that the Prince of Wales was at once the most chivalrous and most skilful warrior of the age, and he hoped to persuade the young hero to espouse his cause, to trample Henry of Trastamare and Du Guesclin in the dust, and to re-seat him on the throne from which he had been driven.

It speedily appeared that Don Pedro had rightly calculated his chances. Indeed, the prince, moved by generosity and compassion, became quite enthusiastic in his cause, and eager to aid him to the utmost. Nor was he without the power of so doing; for the country at that time was overrun with the "free companies," ever ready to hire their swords for pay; and Pedro promised, on his word as a king, that, in the event of being restored to his rights, money should be forthcoming to satisfy all demands. Nothing, indeed, could be more magnificent than his promises. It really seemed that every soldier who fought for him was certain to make a fortune, and might indulge in visions of boundless wealth. Not doubting the royal exile's good faith, the prince, after holding many councils, resolved to raise an army and march into Spain as Pedro's champion.

It must be admitted that the enthusiasm of the prince was not shared by all around him; and the Princess of Wales was one of those who entertained grave doubts as to the policy of the expedition. When tidings that the prince had finally decided on marching to restore Pedro was conveyed to her while at her toilette, she expressed herself strongly.

"I grieve to hear," said she, "that my husband has allowed himself to be imposed on by a man so criminal and so cruel."

"Ha!" exclaimed the prince, when her words were

reported to him, "I see she wants me to be always at her side; but, by St. George," added he, "say what they may, I am determined to restore Castille to its rightful inheritor."

In fact, the die was cast; and the prince, having assembled an army of thirty thousand men, marched for Spain, and, having crossed the Ebro, came up with the foe between Navarretta and Najara.

Henry of Trastamare and Bertrand du Guesclin were not, however, warriors to yield without a struggle; and, to meet the crisis, they mustered an army of a hundred thousand mēn, and prepared to encounter the conqueror of Cressy and Poitiers in close conflict. Accordingly, on Saturday, the 3rd of April, 1367, the two armies met at Navarretta, and fought a severe battle. But nothing could withstand the Prince of Wales; and that day he well maintained the character he had won as a war-chief, and gained so complete a victory that, seeing their men scattered in all directions, Henry of Trastamare fled to France, and Bertrand du Guesclin surrendered himself prisoner to Sir John Chandos.

When the news spread over Europe that Don Pedro was restored to his throne by the arms of the heir of England, the French dreaded the prince more than ever; and high was the admiration which the tidings of his exploit created, especially in England, Flanders, and Germany, and even among the Saracens. But, while Christendom was ringing with his name, and sovereigns were bowing at the mention of it, and while the citizens of London were celebrating his victory with solemn shows, and triumphs, and feasts, the Prince of Wales was in melancholy mood. Already he discovered the truth of the words spoken by the princess. He had been grossly deluded by the miscreant whom he had befriended.

Never, indeed, was a champion more ungratefully treated by the man for whom he had conquered. No sooner was Pedro restored to his kingdom by the prince's victory at Navarretta, than he forgot all his promises as to paying the "free companies," and the prince, after waiting for a time in the expectation of justice, in a climate that was proving most injurious to his health, lost all opinion

of Pedro's good faith, and, returning to Bordeaux, burdened with debt, endeavoured to raise the money to defray the cost of his expedition by the hearth-tax. Much discontent was the consequence. Indeed, the Gascons declared that they had always been exempt from taxation, and appealed to the King of France as sovereign of Guienne.

By this time John of Valois was dead, and Charles, John's eldest son, occupied the throne of France; and though, by the treaty of Bretigny, the provinces of Guienne and Languedoc had been conveyed in full sovereignty to England, Charles not only responded to the appeal of the Gascons, but resolved on citing the Prince of Wales, as his subject, before the Chamber of Peers.

Accordingly, Charles of Valois despatched a knight and a lawyer to Bordeaux, and, on being admitted to an audience, they proceeded to read the letter with which they had been intrusted, summoning the heir of England to appear without delay at Paris. The prince listened, eyed the Frenchmen, and shook his head.

"Well," said he in reply, "I will willingly attend on the appointed day at Paris; but, by St. George, it will be with my helmet on my head, and with sixty thousand men at my back!"

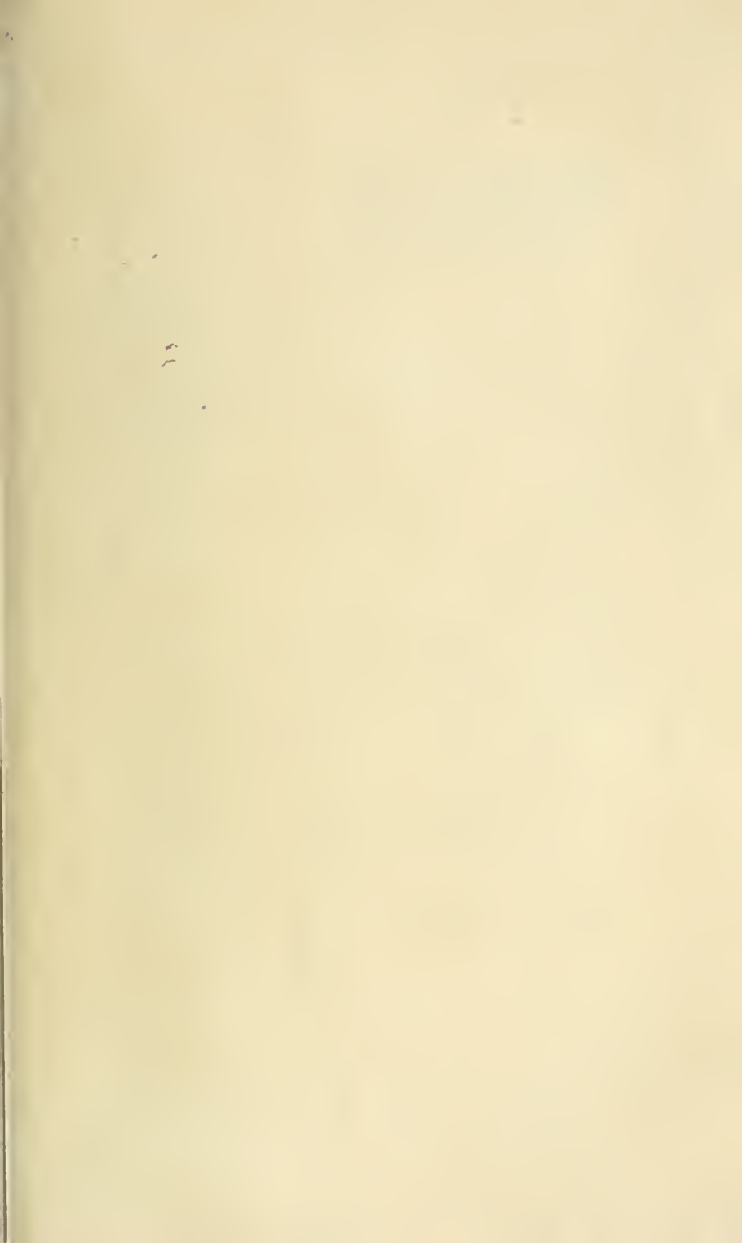
Much alarmed was Charles of Valois on learning how the Prince of Wales had treated his summons, and how, in spite of his malady, he had put on his armour, mounted his horse, and displayed his banner. But it soon appeared that he was no longer himself—that he was not the Edward of Cressy, or Poitiers, or Navarretta; and when the campaign terminated, and he returned to Bordeaux, such was his languor that the physicians counselled him to repair to England.

Agreeably to the advice of his physicians, the Prince of Wales, with the princess, and their infant son Richard, embarked at Bordeaux, and, having landed at Southampton, took up their residence at Berkhamstead. But the prince, though he recovered sufficiently to take a part in public affairs, never regained his strength; and it was suspected that he had been poisoned in Spain. At length, on Trinity Sunday, 1376, after languishing for years, he expired at the palace of Westminster.

Great was the grief, loud the lamentation, caused by the news that the hero of England had departed this life ; and in celebrating his obsequies no ceremony was omitted that could do honour to his memory. Canterbury having been selected as the religious edifice where his bones were to rest, great preparations were made for his burial, and when the appointed time arrived, a stately hearse, drawn by twelve horses, conveyed the corpse from Westminster ; and, with great pomp, the remains of him who had been the pride of England and the terror of France were laid in the south side of the cathedral, hard by the shrine of Thomas à Becket.

And so, mourned by the nation to whose grandeur he had so mightily contributed, Edward, Prince of Wales and Duke of Guienne, the flower of English knighthood, passed from glory to the grave, at a time when his father was on the verge of the tomb, and when his own son was scarcely out of the cradle. But it is not within my province to speak now of the dead hero's dying father, or of the prince's ill-fated son. My tale is told. With the death of the conqueror of Cressy and Poitiers ends "The Story of the Black Prince's Page."

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